

Diary for 1990

12-14	January	Perthshire, Loch Tay	Alistair Andrews
17	January	London Lecture	Elizabeth Parry
2- 4	February	Laggen Bridge, Newton More	Alistair Andrews
23-25	February	Northern Dinner Meet, Patterdale	Brooke Midgeley
28	March	Joint Meeting with Anglo-Swiss Society	Swiss Embassy
30	March-1	April ABMSAC Hut Maintenance Meet	Don Hodge
14-21	April	Easter Meet, Onich	Ben Suter
28	April	Surrey Walk	Ben Suter
5-12	May	May Day Meet, Skye	Ben Suter
9	May	London Lecture (Buffet Evening)	Mary Boulter
25-28	May	Lake District Scrambles Meet	Rudolf Loewy
22-24	June	Peak District Scrambles Meet	Ben Suter
24	June	Surrey Walk	Jack Derry
6- 8	July	Snowdonia Scrambles Meet	Ben Suter
22	July-11	August Joint ABMSAC/AC/CC Alpine Meet	Mike Piney
28	July-11	August ABMSAC Alpine Meet	Harry Archer
4-18	August	Family Weeks, Patterdale	John Murray
19	September	Alpine Meet Reunion, London	Mary Boulter
22	September	Walk, Virginia Water	Peter & Gillian Bull
5- 7	October	Buffet Party Meet, Patterdale	Marion Porteous
12-14	October	TCC Hut Maintenance Meet	Don Hodge
20	October	Club Annual Dinner, London	Peter Ledboer
21	October	"After Dinner" Walk	Ben Suter
2- 4	November	Alpine Meet Reunion, Patterdale	Mike Piney
5	December	Annual General Meeting, London	The President

For Meets: Book with the person named. For individual bookings at the George Starkey Hut at times when there is no meet, book with John Murray, 4 Sunny Point, Crook, Nr. Kendal LA8 8LP. Tel: 0539 821754.

London Meetings are at the Royal Institution of Naval Architects at 7.00 p.m. Refreshments are usually available before and after the Meeting.

THE ASSOCIATION
OF BRITISH MEMBERS
OF THE SWISS ALPINE CLUB
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A MOUNTAIN TO YOURSELF

by Harry Archer

It feels good to get away from the crowds and to be the only party on a mountain or, better, on a whole mountain range. This was easy in the old days in darkest Africa and must still be possible in remote places, although I heard recently that even the Himalaya has its crowded areas; and one is hardly alone when anything from 20 to 500 porters tramp along with you. So what hope is there of getting a mountain to oneself in the Swiss Alps? Each year I work on this problem, with varying degrees of failure, but surely there must be a way of avoiding the madding crowd?

First, what is and what is not popular? Popular seems to be 4,000 metres or more, easy, but imposing, and a well known name. How impressive to be able to say that you have climbed the Matterhorn, neglecting, however, to add that you have encountered problems more akin to those of the London rush hour. On the other hand how unimpressed your listeners would be to hear you say that you had a wonderful day's climbing on the Unterzweigabelschilthorn only (3,999 metres) and worse, that you did not get to the top.

So, where, in 1989, was this lonely peak to be found so that we could enjoy its unpopularity. First a bit of deception to make sure that it did not suddenly become popular, "its just a boring recce; doubt if we will actually climb anything; can't remember the name - and so on to deter the summit baggers. Next the guide book was consulted, available only in antique German, and there it was - an unpronounceable name never heard before, a peak indistinguishable from its splendid neighbours and a Guide Book entry like "easily climbed from the North Col" or "the way is obvious", etc. It was obviously very unpopular and the editor of the Guide Book had not climbed it. The combination of unpopularity and mystery was irresistible.

Then came the choice of the team, preferably two ropes of two, all not too concerned with getting to the top but liking some exploration and novelty, that is an "interesting climb". And so it was that with this happy little team we set out. First stop was a dortoir, there being no hut, and so we had a better night's sleep than usual and no problem in getting off good and early. Two hours trudge in the dark up to the place where a hut would have been and then on. No footsteps, no Mars bar wrappers, no tins, no plastic bags and, once away from the path to the Col no signs and no cairns. On we went and, suddenly, a shock! Yes, someone had been that way before. There was an old wooden chock. It made my day, a reminder of the time when on a remote peak I found an ancient ice axe, a remnant from an expedition of the Duke of Abruzzi. Both chock and ice axe were left where they were so that others might have the pleasure of finding them again. We climbed on.

Find yourself a mountain which you can have to yourself, even if only for a day, and have a more "interesting" climb. A challenge for you at Zermatt at the 1990 Meet?

PIZ PALU - NORTH PILLAR OF THE EAST PEAK

by David Watts

Now for a close encounter with the 'astronaut lifestyle'; the closest for the present existence! Rarefied air rasps in the lungs. Above the head, a sky of ultramarine and burning solar rays. Life-support-system hangs heavy on the back: umbilical cord drapes from the midriff, down the ice arete between cramponed boots. The headwall steepens to sixty degrees, as the rim of a lunar crater. Two more placements of the iceaxe, an upward movement between the wings of a fractured cornice, and the summit is gained.

At once the mind relaxes into multiple modes of thought. No longer the single-minded concentration on balance, contact points and sheer survival. Mechanically, the rope is taken in; socially, a triumphal smile exchanged with Terry who swiftly ascends, revelling in the exposure and the exercise of his alpinist skills. 800 metres below, the Pers glacier begins its winding descent to join the crevassed Morteratsch. Yes, it is good to be alive and to explore these alpine wonders like a little child.

I counted myself fortunate to team up with Terry McManus, (Monte Rosa) before the close of my stay in Eastern Switzerland, for a four day trip to the Bernina Alps. Based at Klosters on the ABMSAC meet in summer 1989, we had already enjoyed a number of climbs on the Austria-Swiss frontier with relatively large parties. Now there was time and the promise of good weather to tackle something a little more demanding. Our first objective was the N.pillar of Piz Palù E.peak, first ascended ninety years previously by Moritz von Kuffner and Martin Schocher with Alexander Burgener. This elegant line of predominantly rock pitches with a final ice arete invites comparison with the Frendo spur at Chamonix or even the Brenva ridge on Mt Blanc. In retrospect, alpine holidays are often most memorable for an appreciable challenge to technical skill or endurance of mind and body. We covet therefore the fitting finale!

The journey south through the Engadine was pleasantly expedited by car through the kindness of Roger James and John Dempster who planned the East - West traverse of Piz Palù and onwards to Piz Bernia. After midday refreshments in Pontresina the cabin lift from Berninahäuser swiftly conveyed us to Diavolezza. This large establishment at 2973m overlooks the Bernina range, and definitely rivals the panorama from the Cornergrat. Diavolezza at weekends is not wholly a place to 'get away from it all'. But the food and facilities compensated for the crowds. And two nights later I was to appreciate the kindness and 'medical' skill of the warden when I returned with a head injury!

About 5.00 a.m. we joined the crocodile of parties traversing easily along the track and onto the glacier. A small icefall ascended, we now made our solitary way as we forked right and headed for the lower left flank of the north buttress. Far above, the higher rocks and summit icefields glittered in the early sunshine. At least one party was visible ahead of us, scaling the rocks to gain the crest of the buttress.

Having crossed the bergschrund we decided to climb towards the crest to the left of the party ahead. Soon, however, we found ourselves in an unenviable position on a pile of unstable steep rock. A short retreat and a rightwards traverse brought us to what was evidently the more usual line. Here occasional pitons were encountered on the pitches leading to the crest.

We had lost some time and now had five hours ascent ahead of us, by guidebook reckoning. According to the French guidebook in the Rebuffat series, the route is graded D-, with pitches of III and IV. To our pleasant surprise, the lower two thirds of the buttress crest consist of excellent sound rock. It was possible to make very rapid progress, moving together most of the time and periodically alternating leads. The more technical pitches were taken with belays, clipping into the occasional piton. Any slight apprehension on my part about the route had long since evaporated with the morning sunrise. Nevertheless, the increasing exposure to both left and right commanded our respectful care and concentration.

Steadily we overtook the preceding Swiss-German party, one of whom sustained a short fall while ascending a 'gendarme'. Now we had reached the final arete of snow and ice which rose towards the summit at an average angle of forty degrees, steeper in parts. We were glad to climb here without anyone above to slip and knock us from our perch! This section was largely a test of confidence and balance. Ice climbing in the noonday sunshine; what a marvellous combination, so rarely experienced in the British mountain scene.

On gaining the summit, we were able to appreciate the exceptionally fine panorama, ranging over Switzerland, Italy and Austria; a real 'cloudwalking' experience. Following lunch on the E. summit, our plan was to continue the classic traverse over the central and west peaks. In these fine conditions it was a far cry from the old movie "The White Hell of Piz Palù". The traverse passed uneventfully apart from the aerial intrusion of several gliders and a tourist plane from St Moritz which buzzed us as we progressed across the west peak.

The final objective that day was the Marco e Rosa hut at 3597m., below Piz Bernina. From the "Fuorcia Bellavista" the route lay across the Bellavista terrace. As we followed the tracks in the rapidly softening snow and the blazing heat of the afternoon sunshine we began to think that there was something to be said for Scottish winter spindrift! In many respects the interminable crossing towards the hut was far more nerve-racking than the north face of Piz Palù. Crevasses were plentiful and serious below Piz Argient and the Crast Aguzza. My reserves of physical and mental energy were falling low as we toiled up the final slope to the hut.

Communication with the young warden proceeded largely by sign language and assorted vocabulary items. Nevertheless, a sleeping place was secured in the crowded hut and a place at table alongside our friends, John, Roger, Alan Mills (Monte Rosa) and Kathy McEwen (guest), who had arrived hours previously. An expensive and not very palatable meal was followed by an early night as I retired to rest a dehydrated body and a sun-scorched face.

The next day's plan was Piz Bernina by the S. ridge and a possible descent of the Biancograt to the Tschierva hut. After the exertions of the previous day we arose somewhat late and set off about 8.00 a.m. We met John and Roger, descending after their successful ascent, and the summit was gained by an exhilarating route in 2 hours. We then proceeded down the more serious rock/ice ridge that leads towards the subsidiary summit, Piz Alb, at the top of the Biancograt. Here we were just in time to meet the numerous waves of parties who had ascended from Tschierva. Several were guided and were making slow progress. It was impossible to effect a bypass. At this rate we would 'begin' our descent of the Biancograt about 2.00 p.m. I thought of the previous afternoon's snow conditions and became apprehensive. It is one thing to climb steep but hard snow and another to descend prolonged 45 degree slush. I could not forget the death of Judy Barham in 1970, as reported in the Collomb guidebook, while descending the Biancograt after a new route had been completed on Piz Alb. These thoughts were reinforced by advice and warning given by several climbers who had just ascended the ridge. Terry was convinced that we could descend the ridge in safety, despite the soft snow. Nevertheless, he acceded to my wishes without complaint or rancour; we about-turned and climbed back to the Bernina summit.

In theory, the rest of our expedition should have been uneventful. We descended to the hut and then began the long traverse along Bellavista to reach the Fortezza ridge of Piz Palù. Again it was late and we were tired by the time we began the descent of that ridge of alternating rock and snow. We were disinclined to arrange ropes for an abseil here and there. Instead we explored devious routes on the flanks amidst steep and loose rock. On one of these passages I was traversing a ledge and straightened up without looking. My head struck a projecting rock with considerable force and blood poured from a wound, quickly soaking both hat and hair! After regaining some composure, we continued our descent with Terry keeping a watchful eye on me. Eventually we reached the glacier, although this was at the worst possible position. Ahead was a Hampton Court maze of crevasses albeit in the dry glacier zone. At times I despaired of finding a through route, but eventually we were across and following a weary trudge up the moraine track reached Diavollezza at 7.30 p.m.

A few climbers outside the establishment gave me curious glances. Where had I come from? Had I climbed solo? Inside the building I walked to the warden's office and secured accommodation for the night. Somewhat embarrassed, I removed my bloodied hat and requested first-aid from the warden's daughter. The poor girl turned pale at the hideous sight and called for her father. The warden was delighted to be of assistance. He had obviously missed his calling. Ushered into the family quarters with all his friends watching, the surgeon bathed, shaved, sterilized and bandaged my scalp. Meanwhile unlimited quantities of Swiss Mountain Fire Water were pressed to my lips. The operation completed, and with a spacious room to ourselves, I soon fell into a deep contented sleep.

Experiences, both good and bad, are wasted if they are not evaluated. My new alpine-climbing resolutions are:

Always wear a lightweight helmet when on alpine rock.

Purchase and apply Factor 25 glacier cream to avoid sunstroke on afternoon snowfields.

If climbing the Kuffner route again on Piz Palù, I would descend by the ordinary route for maximum enjoyment. Or, if proceeding to the Marco e Rosa hut, I would bypass the traverse of the west peak, descending to the Altipiano- di Fellaria. And the classic Biancograt is probably most safely done in ascent, after all. Then following such a long day an overnight stay at the Marco e Rosa can precede an early descent to the Morteratsch glacier.

CHILDREN AND THE CHILBIRITZENSPITZ

by Mark J. Eddowes

It had been six seasons since Heather and I had last climbed in the Alps together, five years since Lucy was born. Not long after Lucy's arrival we had joined the ABMSAC. Already members of the Diableret section from our time spent living and working in Lausanne a few years earlier, we saw this as a way of keeping some contact with the Swiss Alpine Club, a longer term investment that would assist our return to the mountains when the children were more or less grown up. At that time we had given no consideration whatever to the possibility of an early resumption of climbing through the activities of the club. However, on reading of the summer alpine meet in a club newsletter, we began to consider whether this might be feasible and decided to try it. Happily, our first meet had worked quite well for us and so we became regular participants, the Klosters meet being our fourth.

The general arrangements of the club summer alpine meet along with our system of taking turns, the one of us on the mountain with club members whilst the other entertained the children, had worked most satisfactorily, enabling us to climb at a time when we had not expected to be able to do so. However, the opportunity of climbing together was something we both missed and so we were quick to accept the offer from honorary grandmas, Sheila and Margaret, along with Wendy, to look after the children for a day. The children too seemed excited about the trip and picnic treat that was arranged for them.

First we had to find a suitable route; within easy road access from Klosters, not too long or difficult to risk delaying our return but providing some climbing interest. Climbs from the Fldelapass were obvious possibilities, but having been there a few days earlier for the Schwarzhorn north ridge, I fancied somewhere different. On a trip to Switzerland earlier in the year, I had managed to get hold of a 1:25000 map of the Klosters region, an area which we had not visited before. This map made interesting bedtime reading prior to the meet and I had identified Dörrboden, at the head of the Dischma valley, south-west of the Fldelapass, as a suitable starting point for one day trips. The Scalettagletscher and Piz Grialetsch, with its ridges running west to the Scaletthorn and north to the Chilbiritzenspitz forming the boundaries of the glacier, stand at the head of the valley. We proposed to climb the Chilbiritzenspitz by its north-west ridge and, if all went well, continue on to Piz Grialetsch.

In the morning we set off from Klosters at around seven, the children still asleep, with Sheila installed in our room to attend to them when they awoke. We had expected to make good progress on empty roads early in the morning and soon arrived at Davos. Here we turned off the main road into the Dischma valley but a little way up we encountered a herd of cattle being driven along the narrow road. They proceeded for some distance at a fairly gentle pace. No doubt the herdsman could see that we were on holiday but he obviously did not appreciate how precious our time was to us this particular morning. Anyway, he was there first and we had to wait. At last the cattle were driven off into the rough pasture along the side of the road and we drove on to the road head at Dörrboden.

From Dörrboden we continued on foot up the valley along the substantial path leading up to the Fuorcla da Grialetsch and the Chilbiritzenspitz west ridge. The lower section of the ridge is climbed easily over grassy patches and stable broken blocks, on one side or other of the crest, until the ridge steepens. On being presented with the first rock step we looked to turn it quickly by the left. However, we soon discovered that the flanks were unpleasantly steep and loose, we found ourselves wasting rather than saving time and not much enjoying the experience. We roped up and took to the crest, finding some enjoyable little pitches and being reminded of what we had come there for. Soon we came in sight of the summit of the Chilbiritzenspitz which was reached easily along the final flat section of the ridge.

We continued a little further along the broken ridge towards Piz Grialetsch. There was still a considerable way to go to reach its summit and time was getting on. The descent from it by the Scaletta glacier didn't look promising; bits of the glacier on one route in the guide book, apparently written fifty or more years ago, were missing and the other route, in places showing hard ice and in part covered by the fresh snow from the heavy falls a few days earlier, didn't seem much better. Anyway, besides that, from the point on the ridge we had now reached an easy scree slope led down on the east side to a snow field, below which was the Grialetsch hut and the path to Dörrboden. We could either push on to the summit in the heat of the noon-day sun, and from there rush straight down to the car and back to Klosters, with luck in time for dinner, or take it easy, having some lunch and, when ready, glissade down the inviting slope below us and carry on down for a cool beer at Dörrboden. We chose the latter.

So we unroped, relaxed and enjoyed the mountains for a while. Then it was time to take to the snow which led us quickly down. On reaching the rocks below I turned, looked back to the ridge and waited a moment for Heather. "It's just like it was six years ago, before they were born" she remarked. It did feel just the same as before, almost unreal, to the extent that it seemed the children and the last six years hadn't happened. We continued down to Dörrboden and then to Klosters where the children received us with tales of bus rides and a picnic by the river.

BACK TO SWITZERLAND

by James Bogle

I returned to Switzerland last summer for the first time for thirteen years; and in consequence it met me with a feeling of distinct freshness as well as familiarity.

Everybody knows about Swiss flowers, but what about Swiss weeds? There rarely seems to be a patch of grass on its own, except in the parks, and the weeds grow to an extent unprecedented in England. They are bigger, better weeds, with the foliage deeply cut in a most decorative way and a splendid variety too. The meadows are enjoyable even when they are not in flower.

When Swiss food is mentioned everyone thinks of fondue or raclette, but I was impressed rather by the Swiss fruit. First there was the fruit for free, the bilberries, strawberries and raspberries growing abundantly in the forest. Then there was the grown fruit, apricots, grapes and greengages more luscious than ever English fruit could be.

Then there are Swiss clothes. I don't mean the regional costumes that are so colourful, but the ordinary respectable clothes of the city dweller. They are all grey. Grey suits, grey ties, grey shirts, grey socks, grey shoes. I suppose grey hair is not obligatory, but I dare say it is an asset. The French have a national colour for dress - a particularly lurid blue - but in Switzerland dress must be grey.

I was reminded of the tradition of 'service'. The job of a waiter or waitress cannot be an easy one, rushed off one's feet, under pressure from impatient customers, and fretting at indecisive ones and yet the Swiss do it amicably, even graciously. Of course it can be said that tourism is in the Swiss's own interest, but that is equally true of many another country where the tourist is treated in a surly fashion, or even cheated or robbed. Not so in Switzerland.

I was reminded too of Swiss religion, neatly divided into Catholic or Protestant. As an Anglican my loyalties ought to be divided, but in fact I generally opt for mass; I would find the alternative too wordy in a foreign language. I have memories of a very moving mass said in the evening light in a tiny chapel set in the middle of an alp, with half the congregation crowded round the door; and by contrast of a magnificent one in the village square on the Feast of the Assumption, with bands, parades in national costume and all the ceremonial one might wish for.

And then there are the mountains. What a gamut of emotions they arouse! The first glimpse of the snows quickens the pulses in anticipation. A more leisurely viewing of the same scene arouses a sense of beauty. It was not always so, and time was when the mountains merely seemed a horror and a desolation. But hardly now; they greet the eye with pleasure. When it comes to moving in the mountains exertion is demanded which leads in due course to weariness. There may also be anxiety if the going becomes difficult or dangerous. A successful ascent means a strong feeling of achievement, and this quite independent of what other people feel about it, though praise from others may enhance it. There is also often a strong bond of friendship with those who have shared the risks of the mountain. It is

no wonder that the emotional appeal of climbing is compelling and that it can lead its followers to make great sacrifices in its pursuit. The mountains have a power to exalt. I don't know whether it is a coincidence that standing on high ground seems to be able to raise the human spirit, but I believe that it often does so.

Switzerland, the Swiss people and their mountains draw us like a beacon. As William Blake has borne witness, "Great things are done when men and mountains meet; this is not done by jostling in the street."

IN WORDS REFINED

WHY CLIMB?

They climbed,
Meeting the shrieking wind that marked the peak,
Small in the icy torrent,
Large in success and beauty,
Together partners in a great achievement,
A small but finite conquest over fear.

Why do men seek to conquer distant goals.
To seek to match their strength,
To master fear?

It is an urge in nature elemental,
Inborne, we can but guess, for our survival
However small a part of space and energy.

HDA

Four gloomy men rose in the dark, and, lit
By one small lamp, drank coffee, gulped some bread
In careful silence, so as not to wake
The innocents asleep in the next room;
Checked and pulled on accoutrements, took up
Their burdens, then, lamp-lit, without a word
Shut the hovel's door behind them, sighed once,
Trudged through the farmyard and the gate beyond,
To find their path, which led among great rocks,
Through half-seen streams, and in due time, the snows
And dismal crags on which the Hooded Monk
Awaited them.

So for some hours they went
Darkling, not speaking, at a measured tread,
Until the sun came up to welcome in
As merry a day as you could hope to see
On the south-west flank of the Chaputschin.

George G. Watkins

In an Alpine Storm

By David Jones

The weather forecast for the last day of my holiday was disappointing; rain and storms were spreading in from the West. So I had warning that the intended trek across the Col de Barberine, from the Emosson Dam into the Val d'Emaney and so back to the Les Marecottes was going to be a wet one.

The 'Col' at 2480 metres is not high, and having crossed it a few years previously, I knew there would be no glacier to cross. Also the route is obvious and well marked, so even if the weather clamped down there should not be any problems with navigation. However, just in case.... into the sack went extra food, clothing, map, whistle and compass.

It was a bright, sunny morning, standing on Emosson Dam looking across to the "Vert" and "Dru". Mont Blanc was already covered in cloud giving warning of the approaching weather front, so walking alongside the Emosson Lake I wondered how far I would get before being enveloped. Not much as it turned out, because at the buildings of the "Ecurie", and starting the climb into the Barberine Coombe, the first thunder growled from across the lake. Storm clouds covered the Finhive mountain, with curtains of rain sweeping across the water. It was time to secure the waterproofs; the next few hours were going to be very wet.

The wild terrain of the Barberine opened out above; in this weather its aspect was forbidding. The col was in view, which meant the cloud base was not low. A tiny yellow-clad figure moved onto a rocky out-crop. It was the shepherd with his white dog at his feet; below clustered the huge flock. The whole scene came in and out of focus in the veils of sheeting rain. As I approached his only greeting was an arm raised in salute; speech would have been impossible. The centre of the storm had arrived with a vengeance. A thunder clap heralded the cloud burst, which dropped rain in an unbelievable quantity. The volume was so great that everything seemed to turn to water, even the air I breathed was saturated. A desperate search for shelter came to a halt because I could not keep my eyes open. I got some relief by drawing my rucksack over my head and curling up into a ball, and so I waited.

At last the rain eased and I moved up to the gap in the rocky bluffs through which the path led to the final scree slopes. To the left, a massive column of black water poured down a large cleft in the cliffs. With the noise of the debris, which it carried down, it appeared to be washing the mountain-side away. Every gully all around was now a waterfall. Within the short space of an hour, the cloud-burst had caused this dramatic transformation.

Suddenly the ground under my boots cut away. Looking up from the kneeling position, I saw the brown liquid pouring through the gap. I was head-on to the making of a mountain torrent. For the next few minutes all my movements were frenetic as I struggled to scramble up the rocks of the bluff, out of its way and out of danger.

The pass was not far above but with the final steep slopes streaming with water, I only made it by short breathless surges. The crossing

was fast and furious, hurled by the wind, battered by hail-stones and deafened by thunder bursting on the peaks around the col. Suddenly there was silence and a release from noise and wind as I dropped into the shelter of the north-side. Now it was only raining.

Before me was the view of the 'Luisin; filling the whole scene. On my left the massive rock wall of 'l'Aboillon blocked the end of Emaney valley. A dozen silver waterfalls streaked down its cliffs, the sight of which made me start off down at once, going fast down to the icy remains of the neve and heading for the gorge which is the entry into Emaney. The path shared the gorge with a torrent and this became a waterfall at the cliff edge. The only crossable place was just before the edge. An anxious thought - "would it be possible to do so?" It was suppressed with a firm "wait and see".

In the gorge it was once more all noise of roaring water, with the waterfall shooting horizontally into space. Climbing carefully down the wet rocks, I could eventually ascertain that enough rock still protruded above the torrent to balance a way across. Slipping only once to collect both boots full of icy water, I clambered out of the gorge and squelched my way down into the Emaney Valley. The rain had stopped, but on looking down I saw that the problems hadn't! The silver cascades off 'l'Aboillon had found their old water courses and were now hurling their combined force across the width of the valley, into the Triege river abutting the cliffs to the right. Directly into the head of the Triege poured the waters of the Barberine fall. All these had effectively sealed in the end of the valley with a water barrier.

At this juncture, the sun thankfully broke through bringing warmth to my chilly wetness and some cheer to my anxious thoughts. But just a rest, to change wet shirt for dry pullover, to empty boots of water and wring out socks. Then to eat and contemplate the situation.

Higher and nearer the cliffs the torrents in their trenches were too wide to leap over. Lower down on flatter ground the water divided, but still ran too fast to wade over; - boulders thrown in were promptly swept away, - adding to the sounds of unseen rocks grinding against each other in the flood. So once more back onto the grassy bank for a re-think and another look at the map and the ground. Not far away could be seen the stone block-house perched on the small dam. If I could reach the right bank of the Triege the river could be recrossed below the torrents by way of the dam. Only one water course came down on the right from the Barberine waterfall so perhaps its spate would not be so powerful as the others. This proved to be the case and before long I had jammed into the water enough boulders to create a bridging point. A deep breath, a step and a jump and I was scrambling up the escarpment and out of trouble.

At the Chalets of the Alpage rain fell once more and continued for the rest of the day. Down through the forest the mist enhanced the silence, and suddenly I realised I was enjoying it all! The gloom brought on an early dusk as I reached the village some two hours later. It had been an eventful day.

Monotonous in Descent

By Dick Turner

"The Matterhorn, Hörnli Ridge - monotonous in descent" - so the guidebook says.

The ascent had been O.K. in fine, clear, warm weather. We began our descent at about 1.30 p.m. Cloud would develop in the early afternoon, we had been told, with stormy weather following by 2.00 p.m. Soon there was dense cloud and it began to snow. We moved off the fixed ropes and onto the iron stanchions on the shoulder. It was now snowing heavily. Thick powder snow gradually covered the route and cloud reduced visibility to about a hundred feet. We were descending cautiously from the last stanchion when lightning struck. It could only have been yards away from John Town, AC, just above me. He was stunned. I felt the shock come down the icy rope as he yelled, "I've been struck by lightning!". I believed him.

We moved as quickly as as we could and caught up with a German party. Visibility was decreasing and all the rock was now covered in snow. We reached the "Red Tower", (turned on the right in descent) but we couldn't be sure we were in the right place. It looked awful. Eventually after trying to find the route round the tower, we joined ropes with the four Germans and decided to abseil about a hundred feet over the ridge edge, which was slightly overhanging in parts, - confirming that this was indeed the Tower.

Before descending I had placed a back-up runner and krab on the abseil rope to aid retrieval. When the last of us - a German - came down, he handed me my sling and krab. He must have descended with the ropes directly through the sling.

The ropes jammed. They wouldn't budge. We were no more than four abseils away from the Solvay Hut - one or two hours in these conditions. More time was taken trying to free the ropes. There was some talk about cutting them. Then the Germans made contact with some Bavarians below us. They had had an accident - one of them was badly injured, perhaps dying. The Bavarians were within shouting distance of the Solvay Hut, where several others were already bivvying. The guides would not return until morning. We had little choice but to bivvy out.

John and I found a small overhung ledge and shivered the night away through the snow and rain. Occasionally, while dozing, I dreamt I was falling, only to wake and find that I was sliding off my ledge, only a foot or so - until the belay held; but not nice! I watched the lights of the party below and the lights of Zermatt appear and disappear through the clouds. By five or six a.m. there were more breaks in the cloud cover and less snow fell, and by 6.30 a.m. we were all moving to warm up. We had a choice: to reascend the jammed ropes, or cut off what we could. We decided to cut them.

In two short abseils we joined the two Bavarians. One was seriously injured, the other badly shaken. A Bavarian guide who had spent the night at the Solvay attached three fixed ropes down to the hut and by 8.00 a.m. we were just above the hut. As I descended the upper slabs, only ten or twelve feet from the hut, the guides told me to stop, to enable them to reach the casualties. Several people ascended past me, and in trying to get out of their way, I attempted a quick descent of the slab. Being tired and cold, and in a rush, I slipped, grabbed the icy rope above my prussik loop and fell the last ten feet, landing right at the feet of the chief guide and rescuer. It was an easy mistake under the circumstances, which could have been much worse elsewhere. The guide dragged me by my harness to a safer position, I received some cuts and a badly bruised arm, - also a rollicking curse in German!

Half a cup of warm water was welcomed - we had only had icicles since 4.00 a.m. The Bavarians were brought down by 10.00 a.m. The guides informed us that the route was in no condition for descent. Besides, we had no rope and I couldn't move my arm to any degree. There were now sixteen of us in the Solvay. The guides began descending slowly, and later, through gaps in the cloud, we saw them all lifted off by helicopter. The route was still bad. We waited until 9.00 at night for the helicopter to come and lift us off. It never arrived as dense cloud kept swirling around. So we took it in turns to lie down and sleep, ensuring that the two Bavarians remained undisturbed. Warm but uncomfortable, (the hut is designed for eight) we passed the night sipping melted water and dozing.

At 6.00 a.m. the radio buzzed : "Helicopter coming: how many to be lifted off?"

'Sixteen'
'Sixteen?!'
'Yes, sixteen . . .'

By 7.00 a.m. the helicopter had arrived, taking the Bavarians off first. Then "Sign here", harness on, winch on, and flying across the east face of the Matterhorn. Though secure, hanging by one arm thousands of feet up over that face was not a little disconcerting. I was spun around and hauled in backwards onto a Spanish climber's lap. John followed. By 10.00 a.m. we were all at the Hörnli Hut.

A slow trip down to the cable car and plenty to drink . . . The rescue bill divided between us all came to 366 Swiss Francs each (£160). On this occasion, monotonous in descent it was not!

Taken from an article in the T.C.C. newsletter Arete with permission from the editor.

Mons Inascensibilis

by Charles Warren

It is perhaps the unexpected episodes in one's mountaineering life which turn out to be the most memorable. I can think of one, for example when, after a climbing holiday in the Dauphiné Alps in 1975, we found ourselves with only two or three days to spare before having to start home. We considered the idea of making a dash to Monte Viso, that peak so often seen from afar and yearned after. But we abandoned that because it was right out of our way. Then, suddenly, I remembered that we were within easy reach of the romantic Mont Aiguille, the former Mons Inascensibilis of Rabelais; so we made a dash for it, an imposing limestone aiguille at the southern end of the Vercors. But what an extraordinary mountain it is with its romantic history and with that surprising flowery meadow on top. There is nothing quite like it anywhere else.

We had some difficulty in finding it; but some girls in a local tourist office helped us on our way. Then, having found our mountain, we camped below it in a delightful forest glade along side two French holiday-making lovers and close by a family party a little farther up the glen. How friendly it all was. The next day we walked to the foot of the ordinary route up the Mont Aiguille, expecting this to be an easy scramble without the need for a rope. When we got there it turned out to be steeper and a little more difficult than expected. However, a party of French climbers, having discovered that we were English, became friendly and lent us a rope.

At the foot of this, the traditional route, there is, appropriately placed, a commemorative bronze plaque to record, in Latin, the first ascent of Antoine de Ville in 1492, a soldier at the court of King Charles VIII of France. Ordered by his master to scale the mountain this he did, using ladders and the usual siege tactics of those days. Arrived on the summit he refused to come down until lawyers from Grenoble had witnessed the ascent, and priests had come up and celebrated masses on the summit. Legend has it that some rabbits were released on the summit; but we met with none of their descendants there.

We followed the route to the top, which nowadays is considered to be of about difficult standard; possibly a little more at the top chimney. All the other routes on the mountain are more than severe, but what a surprise it is when you raise your head out of that last chimney and find yourself up on that flowery meadow! Surely one of the most astonishing places to be found anywhere. Almost flat and measuring some hundred yards wide by five hundred long. We walked up the gentle slopes through a field of flowers to the summit where we enjoyed an "entente cordiale" with our French friends.

After a short sojourn there and a glimpse down those terrific southern precipices, we descended, without difficulty, to our idyllic camp in the forest glade, having bade farewell to our French friends and restored to them their rope. In the camp that evening my friend went up the glen to collect water from a spring and on passing by the family party camped near us was regaled by the vision of the daughter, quite

unselfconsciously disporting herself in the nude in the modern French fashion. No longer "The God pursuing the maiden hid"; all is now acceptable in such idyllic surroundings.

What an exciting excursion this had been. Something quite unusual. It remains with me to this day, as one of the most memorable in my life. The climb never difficult, but always historically interesting. And that meadow on the top! I would not have missed it for anything.

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Fast Cars, Monros, Distilleries and Malt

By Tony Husbands

If anyone read my note in the last Journal they will remember that I had been fortunate enough to have had some very good weather in Scotland in June 1988 and perfect conditions for a traverse of Ben Starav, with some splendid views from the top.

Whilst reading during the winter I came across the words of Sir Hugh Munro concerning Beinn Sgritheal, as follows:- "The view (from the summit) remains in my mind as perhaps the most beautiful I have seen in Scotland". An opinion shared by Hamish Brown; so I decided I must go and see for myself. Another point in favour was that it would be possible to obtain a good view of Ladhur Bheinne, the most Westerly Munro on the mainland. Incidentally, of those I have been up, this took easily the longest time. From the East end of Loch Houran, at sea level, one has to ascend about 1000ft., walk seven miles, descend to sea level again and then start the ascent proper. And of course, all to be retraced on the way back. About the only other way of approach is by boat across Loch Nevis. I remember once at Arolla asking John Whyte if he would like to go up Mont Blanc de Seilon and when he agreed I said "Good; then we will go by boat!" He thought I was barmy but he enjoyed the experience in the end.

I had another reason for wanting to go to Scotland. I was walking along Gresham Street in the City one evening in early 1988 when I saw a car I did not recognise. Not that I had much interest in cars; I thought my little Escort would see me out, but this car was something quite exceptional and I subsequently discovered that the chief designer of Lotus had described it as the most beautiful production car of all time. A year later, on my way to the Alpine Club, I saw it again and by good fortune I managed to acquire it. The only slight problem is that its twelve cylinder engine can produce 340 b.h.p. (drivers are warned in the instruction manual not to change down into second gear if the car is travelling at more than 102 m.p.h.). So it is all too easy to exceed speed limits, but in Scotland I know plenty of roads where it is not quite so necessary to keep an eye on the speedometer.

I started by staying at Edzell with Charles Robertson with whom I had been in Scotland last year. We had arranged to meet a mutual friend, Archie Scott, at the Glen Shee ski centre in order to take a training walk over Glas Maol and Creag Leacach. Archie brought with him another mutual friend, George Ballingall. It was a fine day and we had a pleasant walk accompanied along the tops for a while by a hang glider who seemed to be enjoying himself.

In the evening Charles and I returned to Edzell and, next day, went back to do three more easy Munros - Carn Aosda, Carn a Gheoidh and the Cairnwell. We were going on to spend two nights with Archie and his wife and as it was years since I had been over the Lecht, it was arranged that Charles should lead the way as far as Mostodloch where I would take the lead as I knew where Archie's house is. On the moors I felt very thirsty and had to stop to get some water out of the rucksack in the boot, but I felt sure I could catch Charles up - even though he had once taken his Morgan up Shelsey Walsh faster than anyone else. But as the miles went by and there was no sign of him I drove faster and faster and as I passed Tamnavulin distillery, I even wondered if I was on the right road, but soon saw the reassuring shape of Ben Rinnes. Charles was not at Archie's house but turned up about twenty minutes later having inadvertently taken a wrong turn and ended up at the Glenlivet distillery.

Next day we walked up Ben Rinnes which, at 2,755ft. is not a Munro but a very prominent hill and one of those on which beacons are lit on important occasions such as a Coronation or the ending of a war. I had been part way up one evening years ago with Sandy MacIntosh, when he was *Manager of the distillery, but was glad to finish it off and see the curious outcrops of rock similar to those on the tops of the Eastern Cairngorms and in the Peak district.* There were good views from the top but it was very windy and cold and we were glad to be welcomed back at the distillery by Donald Matheson who had recognised us on our way through and who soon had some tea provided. We were lucky too because Anthony Tennant, the Guinness Chairman, had visited the still the previous week and a cask had been sampled, so Donald was able to give us a dram of pure Benrinnes. There are very many straight malts available in bottles these days but there is nothing at all to compare with an old malt taken from its original cask and slightly diluted with its own distillery water. Since the distilleries went 'dry' about twenty years ago a real dram is hard to come by.

We went over to Dornie and next morning we telephoned Archie's son Alastair who was at his cottage at Kylerhea on Skye. Some people may have read his chapter entitled "The Wind River Mountains" in the book "Trekking - Great Walks of the World" edited by John Cleare. We arrived at the ferry just as Alastair stepped off. We drove round to Arnisdale and parked the car on the beach. That is one snag with the Western hills, whatever their given height, one has to climb every foot of it! Although the going was very steep the trouble did not start until we reached about half way up, then we were on loose stones, rather bigger than scree, and well coated with lichen and moss, which were all very slippery indeed after the heavy rain. Only Alastair seemed to cope without much difficulty. Such is the penalty of age.

The summit of Sgritheall was eventually reached and the superb view was well worth the effort. I hope Hamish will not mind if I give his description of what can be seen: "Rhum, Mull, Jura, all the "country" of Knoydart, Moidart, Ardgour, Creag Meaghaidh, the Grey Corris, Ben Nevis, Bidean, the Glen Shiel ridges, Affric, the Lapaichs, Sheasaich, the Torrindons, Slioch and beyond, Applecross, the Cuillin of Skye and the outer Hebrides. It was a formidable array. I would not have swapped it for any mountain view of the world".

We took our time to take it all in and then set off down the West side. Much lower down the path goes through some thin woods which is very pleasant as it is still possible to see Loch Hourn through the branches. Alastair volunteered to go and get the car so we oldsters could go more directly down to the road and save about two miles. On the way back we stopped and went down to Sandaig where Gavin Maxwell had lived. It is a very peaceful spot but apart from a cairn to commemorate Maxwell and another for his otter *Edal, nothing else remains.*

Next day was rain and low cloud, but we had intended to have a look at Ben Attow, so set off accordingly. At about 1,000ft. we got a glimpse of a bit of the top ridge which looked pretty steep and as I felt very tired and knew there would not be a view I gave up; a pity, as Archie and Charles returned and said it had been quite easy with a good stalkers' path practically all the way.

We hoped to do the Five Sisters of Kintail but thought we were probably not fit enough so we set off back next day and parted company at Inverness.

Then down to Blair Athol in the hopes of doing the three Munros of the Beinn a Ghlo group to bring the total up to twelve, but it was not to be. On the way up Carn Liath the wind was very strong and I wondered what it would be like on the top. I hadn't expected it to be quite so ferocious. I set off downhill towards Braigh Coire Chruinnbhalgain but whenever I took a foot off the ground I was blown several feet sideways and only just managed to stay upright. I realised that I would be sideways on to the wind from the col onwards and this would probably mean crawling on all fours; also that the wind-chill factor would be great. So I decided to give up. I can't remember ever having been beaten by the wind before. Although very disappointed, the descent from Carn Liath was made pleasurable by seeing about fourteen blue hares. One in particular was very friendly and would wait until I was within a few feet, then run some distance in front and wait again until I had nearly caught it up when the same procedure was repeated.

Silvretta '55

by R. Wendell Jones

Maurice Freeman's amusing account of a journey by tandem in the thirties, "On first visiting the Alps" (1988 Journal), inspired me to put pen to paper on a like theme, although my only cycling achievement in that decade was to pedal my tricycle into the pond in our local park. My own cycling tour to the Alps was of post-war vintage, but after a lapse of 35 years it may be worth recalling.

My ally, Horace, a steed of experience and adaptability, had served his apprenticeship towing a golf trolley between the two clubs of which I was, at the time, a member. (Yes, I was as poor as a church mouse; the combined subscription which might now reach £600, then aggregated 7 guineas, £7.35).

Plan A was to include tent, sleeping bag, stove and cooking utensils. Added to domestic and climbing gear this tipped the scales at 78lbs. Alas, a quick turn in the drive proved that under such a load, the back wheel was hopelessly unstable.

Came Plan B - tent, sleeping bag, stove and cooking utensils were abandoned, accommodation would have to be found as I made my way.

A couple of panniers went on either side of the back wheel, my rucksack was attached to the rear of the saddle, and an axe, long and Whymperish, ran parallel to the cross-bar, its point liable to damage an incautious knee. Thus late one September evening I set out for Dover, a mere 15 miles away. The Ostend ferry was no drive-on drive off vessel and even Horace had to be heaved on board by crane.

I joined forces with a fellow rider, bound for the Ardennes. After early breakfast in Bruges, we joined the Autoroute, and bowled along at a steady 12 m.p.h. on its hard shoulder - the M1 was still only a glint in the planners' eyes and neither of us had any knowledge of Motorway Regulations. We lunched at Ghent and slept at Aalst. Interspersed with beer-stops every 15 miles, this established the pattern for the next week or so. A normal day's run was 60 to 80 miles.

The broad plains of Flanders gave way to the wooded forests of the Ardennes and Luemburg, and then to the attractive winding valley of the Sure to Trier. Crossing the Hunsruck, I visited St Wendel, home of my patron saint, situated alas on the edge of the Saar Coalfield and not improved thereby. The Saar was about to rejoin West Germany - shades of 1989 - and the local Customs Office proved a little sensitive when I crossed the German frontier for the third time in two days. Crossing the Rhine at Karlsruhe, and going on and up through the Black Forest, I followed Lake Constance (the Bodensee) to the Austrian border. Day 10 saw Horace and myself walking rather than riding up the 1000 metres of vertical height to the Silvrettasee, and a snowy welcome at the Madlenerhaus. Here, Horace was garaged, and the following morning I set off for the Wiesbadener Hut. My diary reads, "I must have looked a sight with one pannier dangling over my chest, another on my back and the rucksack slung over one shoulder". Thus burdened it took three hours to reach the hut (2,500 metres).

Next day I tagged on to a rope behind a local guide. There followed "a dull snowslog across a fairly heavily crevassed glacier and past the icefall. Hardish work in soft snow, but with no difficulties attached; then we did a right hook up to the Eckhornscharte, on to the frontier ridge. There followed a steepish climb which might have been reasonably easy under good snow conditions, but was dangerous rather than difficult with snow covering scree, ice and handholds. Half-way up was a minor cliff which proved a bit tricky; I got hauled up it like a sack of coals whilst looking for a good hold." There follows a short diatribe about the guide's failure to use any form of belay. "After this things were a bit easier, though still pretty steep and by 2 o'clock we were "berghelling" on the summit. We had started at a civilised 9.30 a.m. and were back in the hut by 4.35. A third of a century later brought the ABMSAC Meet back to the Silvrettahorn; one party somewhat surprisingly even repeating the route from the Wiesbadener Hut.

Next day I joined another rope with the same guide and six hours saw us up and down Piz Buin, also a popular climb from the Klosters side. After a few scrambles on the Dreiländerspitz and Piz Jeremias, on a day so hot that my lower lip swelled as far as my nose, I and the panniers returned to the Madlenerhaus and commenced the long descent to Landeck. Horace had already damaged a pedal hitting the kerb; now he skidded on a loose gravel road, and the subsequent crash broke his three-speed cable. Future ascents would have to be done in top!

After this I felt that a night in the fleshpots was deserved and I treated myself to a 25 shilling (then 7/-) dinner and my first hot bath in 10 days, at the Schwartze Adler. Horace too was under cover. Looking back it seems amazing how many quite tolerable hotels were prepared to wheel him across the foyer for a night under the stairs. In 1990 neither he nor I might have got past the front door.

Faced with a choice between the Zillertal and the Oetzal, I chose the latter since I would lose less of the spell of fine weather on the journey. The first part of the route lay along the broad valley of the Inn and then turned sharp right towards Vent, 34 miles up the Oetz Tal. The last 20 miles took four hours up a deteriorating road. Some way short I was flagged down. Road works were in progress - I might go however if I "geht schnell". Pedalling hard, I turned my head to the sound of explosions with stones flying across the track.

Leaving Horace once more, I walked up the valley to the Similaunhaus, just across the border. Here I met some "Italians", "Italy was the mother and son of a pig and they spat upon her". The Treaty of Versailles had left the South Tyrol in Italy, and its Germanic majority were still far from reconciled to the situation. I teamed up with a lad from the RAF and his Austrian guide. Eric was paying Willi 100 schillings (£1.50) per day and on the latter agreeing to include me in the party, the rate was adjusted to 150 for the two of us. Similaun that afternoon was followed by the 3,500m Fineispitze and a day later the Wildspitz, at 3,770m the highest summit in the Tyrol. My diary says we did the 950m from Vent to the Breslauer Hut (shut) in under two hours, the summit (ascent 1,900m) in 5 hours and were back in 8½. The next 3 days brought solo ascents of two more 3,500m peaks and failure on the third. Each involved some 6,000 feet of ascent, so there seemed something to be said for cycling to the Alps as a means of getting fit.

On 27th September the weather broke and it was time to turn for home. The road out seemed little faster downhill and the first 9 miles took 1½ hours. After that I was back to the daily 70 mile slogs. Hills were difficult because of the lack of gears and one day Horace's chain fell off five times. The days went by. Just after passing Bonn, I got on to the Autobahn. It was as good a road as the Brussels motorway, but the reception was different. Shaking fists and gesticulations were the precursor of a jack-booted and bepistolled policeman who leapt off his motorbike, and made me wonder who had won the War. It seemed prudent to know even less German than usual. "Nicht Verstehen!". An outraged finger pointed across the fields to the old main road, and thither I slunk. A fine however would have been disastrous. One diversion took me to Heidelberg, another to Amsterdam. Holland brought wet weather and I went through sheets of rain.

Came the 11th October, 37 days after departure, and Horace and I were back in Ostend. My diary's last entry mentions a wheel wobble which was worrying me slightly. I was back on board and my longest continental holiday was over. The cost - £42 staying in hotel, pensions, fremdenzimmers and huts, and this included £4 of Guides' fees. The distance about 1,600 miles. The climbing 40,000 to 50,000 feet of vertical ascent. The sequel - Three miles out of Dover, I braked on a descent. Horace shuddered, his frame fractured below the handlebars and the front wheel fell off. A nearby grocer's evening cup of tea was disturbed by the sound of an appalling crash. The last 12 miles were spent with the shattered Horace in the back of his van.

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Treking on Horseback in Southern Spain

by Johanna Merz

South of Granada there is a high range of mountains which has snow on it all the year round. Between these mountains and the sea lies a stretch of country known as the Alpujarra. It consists of a long valley, running east and west, between the Sierra Nevada and the coastal range. White sun-baked villages are dotted among the foothills rising on each side of the valley. The villages are about a mule ride apart because mules were used in the old days to bring fish and other supplies up from the coast. One can still follow the old mule paths - the best way is on horseback.

There were eight of us on the trek, plus Rita our leader. We spent the first night at a farm near Orgiva where 16 horses were kept in tip-top condition. On the first morning, after being questioned about our previous experience, we were each given a horse to ride and look after for the week. Mine was called Rosita and I was relieved to be told that she was the quietest horse in the stable. English cavalry saddles were used over a blanket folded into four, an arrangement which was very comfortable both for the horse and the rider. All our kit had to go into two small saddle-bags and weigh no more than 9 lbs, so that the horses should not be overburdened. Then off we went, one behind the other, up the easy river valley which runs from Orgiva into the heart of the Alpujarra.

Soon the path left the river and climbed up over a pass. Near the top we stopped for a breather and to allow the horses to graze. On most days we rode only in the morning with one short break - and these stopping places must have been specially chosen for their beauty. Today we could see right across the valley towards the foothills of the Sierra Nevada where we were going. The horses could manage some amazingly rocky ascents, scrambling up them confidently. On the steepest bits we stood up in our stirrups and leant forward to make it easier for them. When the path was narrow or led steeply downhill, we would dismount and lead them. Sometimes we had to mount and dismount half a dozen times in the morning, which was excellent exercise.

Rambling up the hillside at the end of this long river valley was the village of Torvizcon. Although our line of horses must have been a familiar sight to the local people, our arrival was still an event, and dogs and children rushed out to welcome us. The first thing was to water the horses. Two or three would drink from a water trough while the others waited their turn. Then we would lead them to their stables, where huge amounts of hay awaited them, while we ourselves would have a long, long drink before being allocated our rooms in the simple inn or posada. We then sat down to an enormous lunch - I'm not used to two large meals a day, but riding gave us terrific appetites. The food was excellent, based on locally produced ingredients and fresh fish brought up from the coast.

The next day was the hardest for the horses as we climbed steeply up into the mountains, across the grain of the country, to the village of Petras. But the great gorge of las Carriguellas barred our way; as we stood at the top and looked down it seemed impossible that a horse could get down it. There were about 30 zigzags to be negotiated, but the horses were unfailingly surefooted and plunged down confidently.

In the afternoons we could either find a flat roof for sunbathing or go and explore the village and its surroundings. Covering about 15 miles a day and having the afternoons free for walking and exploring was a very good way of seeing the country.

From the top of a ridge above Petras there was a clear view of the snow-topped summits of the high mountains, with the villages of Bubion and Capillera nestling at their feet; southwards lay the coastal range between the Sierra Nevada and the sea across which we had ridden only that morning. It had taken me 1½ hours to reach the top of this ridge from which I was enjoying these marvellous views, and I had almost forgotten that we had to be back by six to groom and water the horses. We had to groom our horses twice a day and it took at least half an hour each time, and then we would proudly lead our horses with their beautiful shining coats through the village to the water troughs for another drink and then back to their stables for more food. Now at last we were free to meet up for a drink ourselves before a large, late and excellent supper.

One morning we rode up to the highest village in Spain, Trevez, through a forest of oak trees where we saw rock roses, orchids and 'hedgehog' - an attractive, deep blue, cushion-shaped plant. Then we came out on to open moorland with views across to the mountains. From Trevez it is possible to climb Spain's highest mountain, Mulhacen, at 3,481m - 10 hours - but not in May with still plenty of snow.

We had a long ride down to Cadiar. First we climbed up through pine forest to the highest point on the trek, from which we could look back for a last glimpse of the snowy tops of the Sierra Nevada. In the other direction, the way we were going, rows and rows of receding foothills floated into the distance above a sea of mist. We led our horses down a series of hills covered with bright yellow gorse and drifts of feathery broom until we rode triumphantly into Cadiar, a large and lively village whose narrow white streets were gay with window boxes.

After another long, leisurely lunch I took my camera and a book and siestered on the hillside opposite the village, with a foreground of olive trees and poppy-spattered cornfields, while behind the village rose the hills of the Eastern Alpujarra towards Gerrald Brenan's village of Yegen. Brenan, a fringe member of the Bloomsbury group, came here after the First World War and rented a house in Yegen. He brought with him 2,000 books in order to educate himself. Then he settled down to a life of writing - about Spain, about village life and about himself; his books are now highly esteemed locally. It was one of them, South of Granada, that first made me resolve, one day, to visit this part of Spain. Now here I was! I could understand what had attracted Brenan and made him want to settle here. The countryside and the villages have even now changed little in several hundred years. Their peaceful atmosphere contrasts strangely with the high-rise buildings and crowds down on the coast.

A straight forward ride down the long river valley beyond Cadiar brought us to Torvizcon. We had completed our circuit through the foothills and were warmly welcomed back at the posada where we had stayed on the first day. All too soon it was time to make our way back further down the valley to the farm at Orgiva. Although we were now

retracing our steps, everything looked entirely different going the other way. On horseback you always look at what's coming and rarely look back, so the rocky pass, with its view of the river valley snaking its way through yellow water meadows, seemed quite unfamiliar.

Back at the farm we unsaddled the horses and spent an hour or so dismantling the tack and washing every single piece with water and saddle soap. Then I gave Rosita her last grooming. It was sad to think she was not my horse any more and that someone else would be riding her the next week.



J MERZ

Patagonia and the Antarctic Peninsula

By John Hailwood

I had great plans for 1989, the year following retirement at 65, but a particularly nasty ruptured patella tendon precluded climbing. However - "no harm in lots of walking", said the Therapist. So January saw me going south through Patagonia to Tierra del Fuego from where I was to embark on the Antonina Nezdhanova, a 4,000 ton Russian ship bound for the Antarctic Peninsular.

Most of Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego (the Land of Fire) is wild and remote if not forbidding and still unknown in parts. People - when you meet them - are friendly and helpful. Patagonia, the name given to it by Magellan, is quite distinct from Tierra del Fuego, that great island or archipelago separated from Patagonia, - in fact from South America, by the Straits of Magellan. When Magellan travelled further south and came to this massive archipelago, almost as large as Ireland, he named it Tierra del Fuego. The north is windswept with great treeless plains but the island centre is mountainous and snow covered from April to November. In the west the climate is no less than sub-Antarctic, with tremendous winds and persistent rain. This part, 70%, belongs to Argentina, the rest, the eastern part, is Chilean.

The Andean Chain, noted for the Fitzroy Group, extends well beyond the Straits of Magellan and the island's mountains are contained in an area about the size of Wales. To me they are mysterious and strangely beautiful with a quality quite removed from those in Europe and the Himalaya. Monte Sarmiento is easily visible from the Straits and it was Eric Shipton who led Anglo-Chilean parties in 1961 and 1962 to make a first crossing of the Cordillera Darwin. Near to the town and port of Ushuaia (Ush-U-Ah), is the splendid Lapataia National Park, an excellent centre for hiking with its giant forests, its lakes and bird-life. There are splendid views of Montes Sampaio to the south-west, across the Beagle Channel, and the many peaks of the Martial Mountains close at hand, as well as the perpetually snow covered heights of Mt. Bove and Mt. Roncagli. This Park covers over 150,000 acres, some 240 square miles. To the east of the Park lies Monte Olivia, a splendid jagged peak, and further east still the peaks of Cinque Hermanos (Five Brothers), which are never free from snow and ice. However, climbers looking for new territory should be warned; as an American in the party said: "Patagonia and Tierra del Fuego are exceptionally beautiful; go there to hike, go there to photograph, but if you want to climb seriously you need to be a masochist and have unlimited time on your hands".

As for the Antarctic Peninsular, it is impossible to condense an experience of this continent of superlatives into a couple of paragraphs. Once across the formidable Drake Passage south of the Horn and with Elephant Island behind us we had "wet landings" most days as we went further south. Wet landings are those made from rubber Zodiacs powered by 45 h.p. outboard motors, which you pray will never fail. It was mid-summer so we had twenty hours of sunlight a day. On we went - D'Urville Island, Jointville Island, Dundee, Paulet, Deception, Half-Moon, Paradise Bay, King George Island and more. Each different from the others - and Mount Wilcox visible in Graham Land at the north end of the peninsular and Mount Charity in the Eternity Range.

In Antarctic waters there are no fixed schedules and travelling is unpredictable. A channel open today may be closed tomorrow and the ship is continually dodging icebergs and frequently ploughing its way through pack ice. Up at five and to bed at midnight was the order of every day, - there was so much to see! Fur seals and crab eating seals, Leopard seals and the Weddell variety; Adelie, Chinstrap, Gentoo and Rock -hopper penguins, with the occasional Macaroni: Antarctic tern, Kelp geese, Rock cormorants and Blue-eyed shags nesting heavily, petrels and shearwaters; - a bird watcher's paradise. "Killer whales to starboard" came the cry from one of our perpetual look-outs. Down into the water went the Zodiacs, down too went the Australian TV team and down too went me in my thermals, wind and waterproof outers, great-boots, red anorak, and goggles. Ten minutes later directed by radio from the Nezdhanova we were in the middle of a pod who put on a fine performance for our benefit, and possibly their own joy at these strange noisesome objects inexplicably in their midst. Later in the voyage we saw Minke whales, - still killed by the Japanese for "scientific purposes", - and the Humpbacks. As for icebergs, the variety and colour seemed endless. The pack ice was still breaking up from its maximum of seven and a half million square miles in September/October, - more than double the effective area of Antarctica - to a modest one and half million square miles in February; giant bergs broken off the tabulars, tens of thousands, nay, hundreds of thousands of smaller bergs and all in a multitude of shapes.

"Great God this is an awful place," said Scott, and in his circumstances it was - and still is. But Scott saw the beauty of it too and its gentler side.

And so to any patella tendon sufferers who are having a year off and have the time, I say "GO" before this great wilderness is spoilt by the mining development still being planned and the run-ways now being built. But the story of this sort of spoilation is not for the Journal.

John Hailwood writes that the journal space in Members' Activities does not enable him to do anything like justice to this great trip. Perhaps we may have the privilege of hearing an account of it from him at an evening meeting (Ed).

AN ALPINE ODYSSEY

The First Continuous Traverse of the Swiss 4000m. Peaks

by Paul Mackrill

We have many 4000m. baggers in the ABM, (despite Mike Pinney's disclaimer in last year's journal) and not a few who have climbed all, or nearly all the Collomb 52, but a traverse of all the Swiss 4000ers in one season, and all the way on foot from the Bernina to the Grand Combin, is surely a unique Alpine journey. And we are now pleased to be able to include an account of this successful enterprise in the journal, because we were privileged to learn about it when it was just planned. Paul Mackrill and John Rowlands outlined the expedition at the 1987 Northern Dinner, when they invited any member who would be on their route to join them on part of the journey. In the event the plan had to be postponed a year; - and no one was able to join them; - it proved a disastrous season in terms of weather, but the essence of the undertaking was accomplished. Congratulations. (Ed).

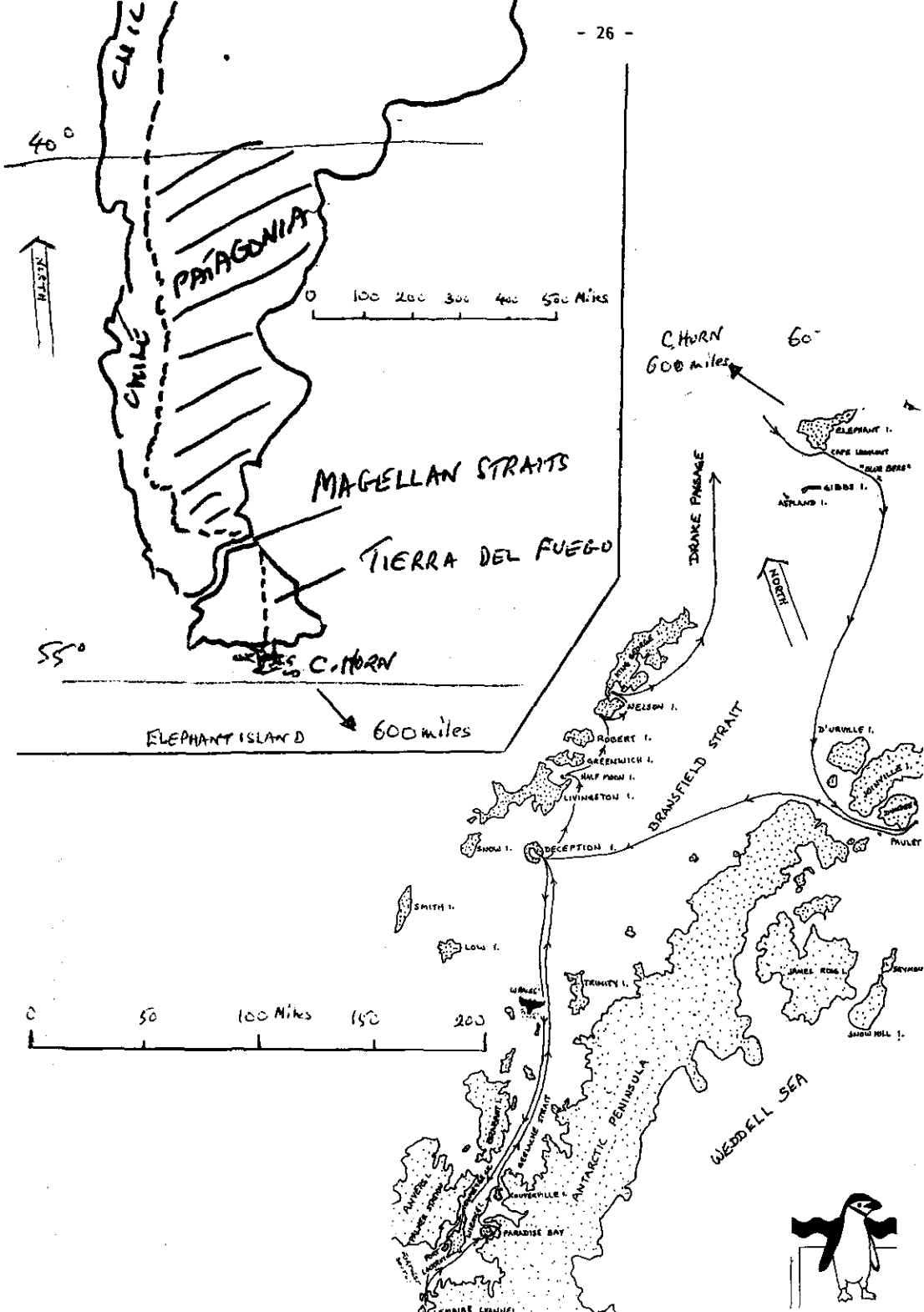
After three years of planning, preparing and training, John Rowlands and I aimed to climb all 79 four thousanders in the Alps in one summer and to cover the whole distance on foot. Our families came with us to act as valley support.

We set off on May 6th up the south side of the Piz Bernina, in beautifully sunny clear weather. Each of us carried a sack with food, clothing, skis, poles, harness and snowshoes. We found all the paths choked with snow and we didn't even make it to the hut, the Rif. Marinelli, - ironically because it was too hot! We were stopped in an amphitheatre with all the snow slopes avalanching across our path.

On May 8th we were at 3400m. attempting the mountain from the north side. The peak had vanished into mist an hour ago and it started to snow, putting down half a meter in an hour. These were avalanche conditions. We turned back again, biting back the frustration, concerned only to get off the mountain safely. Descending was a nightmare as, lower down, the snow turned to rain, which softened the loose snow. It was a relief just to get back to the hut, the Boval.

We had four days of waiting. A week had passed since we'd arrived. Was this whole thing really feasible after all? After returning to the valley and my family twice, empty handed, I was beginning to feel guilty but Gill was encouraging; it was early days yet. On 13th we set off for the mountain a third time. The next day, with a hold in the weather, we finally made the summit of Piz Bernina, our first 4000m. peak.

The next bit should have been easy. A walk over relatively low Alpine passes to the Bernese Oberland. A brisk, breezy walk past St. Mortiz west and next day saw our first pass, Pas Della Forcola - 7000ft. of ascent; very hard going on soft, sugary snow. Then the rain set in. We could only sense the shape of the passes. The effort each day was as much as any full-blooded peak. It must get easier I told myself. The second pass, (De Trescolmen), was worse. After a third pass, Gidmela, on even more treacherous ground we took to the valley roads



except for the Nufenen. This summer road pass was still under 10m. of snow; so nine gruelling days after making the first summit we arrived in Fiesch, at last ready to enter the Oberland, - where we were to experience even more atrocious weather.

The Oberland sets a logistic nightmare. All food and equipment has to be carried in. With food for any waiting days we found ourselves shouldering 65lb packs, which we had to carry up 6000ft. to the Konkordia hut, - no Guardian at this time of the year.

The weather played cat and mouse with us for the next 3½ weeks, as we took on the mind-blowing Aletsch glacier, ferrying gear up and down five times, looking for a break in the weather. It responded with snow, cloud, wind and regular avalanches, resulting in several abortive sorties to attempt our first Oberland summit, Gross Grönlhorn. On our second attempt, we reached a shoulder on the subsidiary summit at 3800m. I could see the summit a short way across from us. I felt I could almost reach out and touch it but a cloud of white fluff came over and began to discharge its load over us and turned us back.

June 20th and our third attempt. There are 300ft. of metal ladders bolted to the cliffs leading from the Konkordia hut to the glacier. I knew every step. Then, with skins on our skis, we plodded on up for hours to see how far we could get. We passed our last high point and crossed a rotten snow ridge to the subsidiary summit. We had to lose precious height to a col. Then a rocky ridge, and after another 45 minutes we stood on the second summit of the trip. We had a toe-hold in the Oberland. Would it be three attempts for every summit?

At last things began to go our way. Over the next six days we climbed six summits. Not one day had truly stable weather. Each one had us guessing. But we climbed all the peaks in the area and could now turn our backs on Konkordia and the Aletsch glacier for good. So rapid was this successful session that we ended up taking down enormous loads of unused food, by far our heaviest carry.

So the pattern continued for the whole trip. We never had settled weather for long and we had to use any settled period that appeared. This happened on our next section when we had to go back east for the Oberland's last two outlying summits, the Lauteraarhorn and the Schreckhorn, and were still forced to sit it out before we could re-enter the range.

We made progress steadily into July when we were finally halted by a combination of weather, fatigue and general morale battering. We had climbed sixteen peaks. Given perfect weather the whole traverse might still be possible but John and I now decided to set our sights on the still never achieved traverse of all 51 Swiss four-thousanders.

Our next objective was the Monta Rosa group and to climb all the summits to the Breithorn above Zermatt. It took 5 days including 3½ days spent continuously over 4000m. And so down to Zermatt.

Our next sortie was to the Michabel group where we achieved our largest number of summits - six. Two days before this we'd been in despair of doing anything after arriving from the valley; the heavens opened and we were forced to make a hasty bivvi amongst a few boulders. This took our total to 40 summits. John's time was running

out but we were able to make one more traverse together along the magnificent north ridge of the Weisshorn to the Bishorn. There our partnership ended.

The weather now broke down completely. It went cold and very wet. Snow came down to within 1000ft. of the valley floor and plastered the high peaks. For eight days I waited with Adrian Robinson, my new companion, and then we took the first weather window that appeared.

The hut warden didn't rate our chances but I judged it would be safe to try. The north ridge of the Zinalrothorn went reasonably easily. It contained the odd pitch of verglas and 100ft. pitch that required digging out all the way but was not dangerous.

Then another day of bad weather. The result was a new snow blanket that had to be painstakingly cleaned from every hold and every slope. It took 7½ hours to reach the summit of the Obergabelhorn from the hut, which is nearly twice the guidebook time.

Now it was the Matterhorn; and it wouldn't yield. It was too dangerous even to attempt, with the large amounts of snow on the east face. Five days later, after climbing two further peaks with Adrian, I returned and ascended the Matterhorn with my third and final partner, Peter Edwards.

The Swiss traverse was still a possibility. I had a group of four summits to climb on the Grand Combin and at last I thought I had enough time in hand; three days effort with seven days to do it in. Two days of walking through high Alpine glacier passes took us to Bourg St. Pierre and the base of the Grand Combin. Again the weather broke and we still needed two days to complete the traverse. The snowline drifted down over the next two days to less than 5000ft., with a meter of new snow. The next four days of waiting were nail-bitingly long as I sat in the van and looked at the clouds. The wind strayed north and the snow continued to build up. On the fifth day it cleared.

Now snow clears quickly in the sunlight but there was still a good covering when we arrived at the Valsorey hut to a welcome of "You don't stand a chance!" Nevertheless I judged that if we could reach the col safely 2000ft. above, we'd get onto the wind blown slopes where most of the snow would have been blasted clear. And so it proved, but over the far side of the col our way was barred by a 15ft. step into a Bergsherund. For the first time in five months I had to abseil on an ice screw.

After six hours we reached the first summit. Adrian decided to stay there; he'd climbed the other three summits previously, so I set out solo to complete my venture, step-cutting up the steep Mur de Cote to reach the summit area. No one else was on the mountain. All the final peaks ranged about me and to the east lay all the other Swiss peaks. It was 19th September and I had climbed every one of those peaks this long summer.

Looking back, the 51 Swiss summits had taken us 130 days from the successful start on May 13th. So if in a bad year we can climb 51 peaks, it seems likely that the Alps' full 79 will one year be climbed.

I was always lucky with injuries. I didn't even get any blisters, and the periods of bad weather allowed muscles to recover. Nor did I lose any weight and none of us had even so much as a sniffle of cold.

Throughout the whole affair we were diligently supported by our wives and families. We came out in two motorhomes and whilst we fought the mountains they battled with traffic jams and tourists, sought out camp sites and took on the chore of having to wash all the clothes by hand. To arrive back totally exhausted, dump our loads, peel off none too savoury boots, and crawl into a haven of warmth, food and homely familiarity is a terrific morale booster.

It had its drawbacks. Setting off was like leaving home each time, tearing ourselves away. But my children, Brendan (5) and Heather (3) seemed to be very little affected. The van was their home and Daddy kept going off for a few days. Brendan did become more aware as time went on; - once when it rained he piped up; - "Good, Daddy can't go up the mountains today, it will be snowing".

We didn't just make the attempt at the four thousanders for ourselves. We were also using it as a platform to raise money for the Foundation for the Study of Infant Deaths (FSID). This is the UK organisation which studies the cause of cot deaths and also organises support for families affected by these tragic and unexplained bereavements. To date we have raised over £2,500.

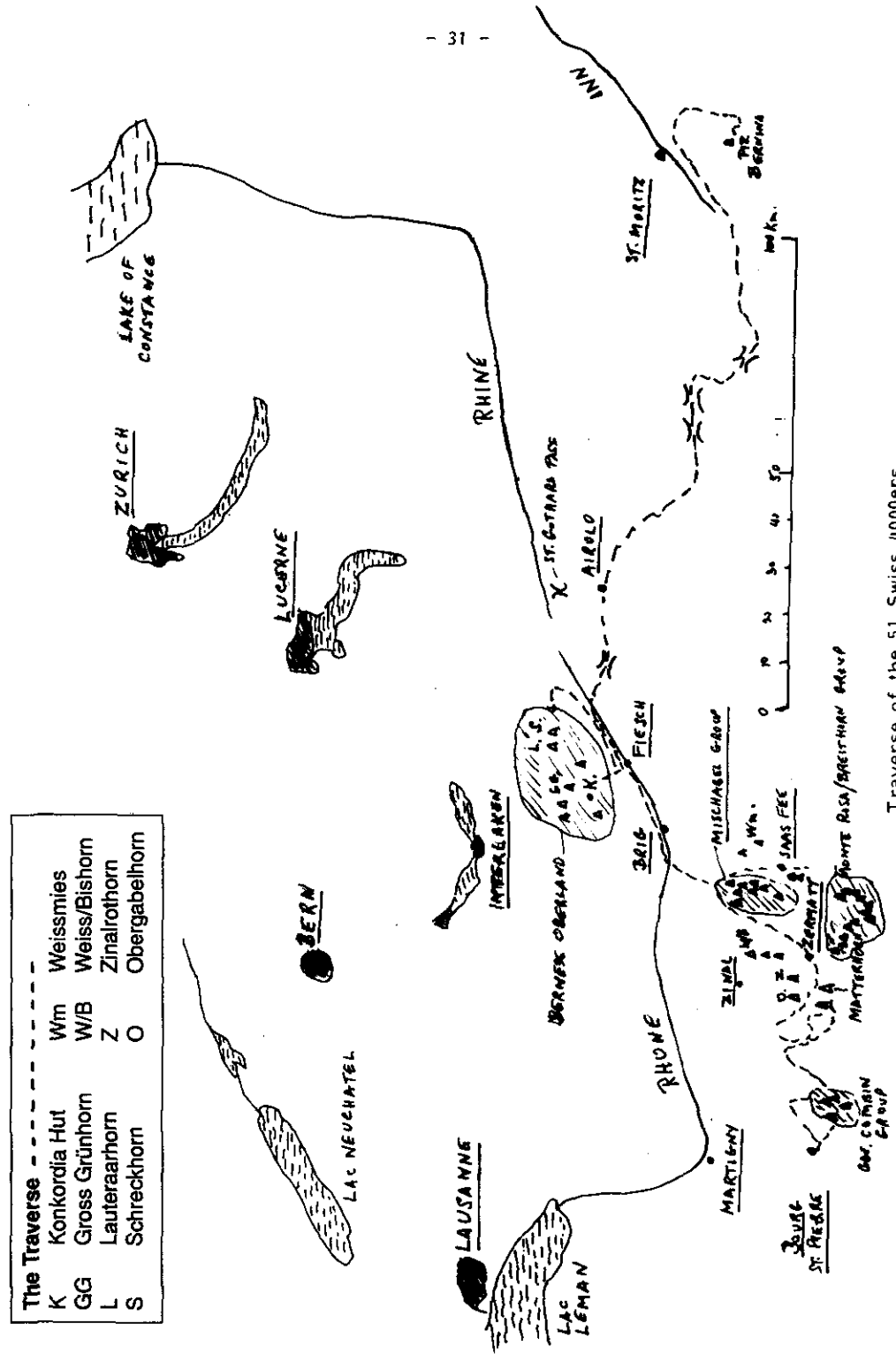
The Traverse

1 Piz Bernina	14 May	30 Breithorn Roccia Nera	8 August
2 Gross Grunhorn	20 June	31 Breithorn East	8 August
3 Hinter Fiescherhorn	21 June	32 Breithorn Central	8 August
4 Gross Fiescherhorn	21 June	33 Breithorn West	8 August
5 Monch	22 June	34 Taschhorn	13 August
6 Jungfrau	23 June	35 Durrenhorn	14 August
7 Finsteraarhorn	24 June	36 Hohberghorn	14 August
8 Aletschhorn	26 June	37 Stecknadelhorn	14 August
9 Lauteraarhorn	8 July	38 Nadelhorn	14 August
10 Schreckhorn	10 July	39 Lenzspitze	14 August
11 Weissmies	16 July	40 Dom	14 August
12 Lagginhorn	16 July	41 Weisshorn	18 August
13 Strahlhorn	19 July	42 Bishorn	18 August
14 Rimpfischhorn	19 July	43 Zinalrothorn	28 August
15 Allalinhorn	19 July	44 Obergabelhorn	30 August
16 Alphubel	19 July	45 Dent Blanche	6 September
17 Nordend	5 August	46 Dente d'Herens	8 September
18 Dufourspitze	5 August	47 Matterhorn	11 September
19 Grentzgifel	5 August	48 Grand Combin Tsessete	19 September
20 Zumsteinspitze	5 August	49 " " Valsorey	19 September
21 Signal Kuppe	5 August	50 " " Croissant	19 September
22 Parrotspitze	6 August	51 " " Grafeniere	19 September
23 Ludwigshohe	6 August		
24 Corno Nero	6 August		
25 Vincente Pyramide	6 August		
26 Punta Giordani	6 August		
27 Lyskamm	7 August		
28 Castor	7 August		
29 Pollux	7 August		

NOTES

Climbing	46 days
Walking	17 days
Rest	15 days
Waiting (weather)	52 days
TOTAL	130 days

The Traverse	---	Weissmies
K	Konkordia Hut	Wm
GG	Gross Grünhorn	W/B
L	Lauteraarhorn	Z
S	Schreckhorn	O



Traverse of the 51 Swiss 4000ers.

Members' Activities in the Last Year

Sidney Beenstock

I feel guilty when I receive an invitation in the Newsletter to send in a note on my climbing and walking, and don't respond. The truth is that I am in my 70s and full of arthritis, and hobbling around Snowdon and the Carneddys and Glydders is now my limit. It was in fact climbing on an ABMSAC Alpine meet in the 60s that ended my mountaineering proper; great ice blocks sliding down a steep ice slope damaged my right thigh. (But I didn't miss the 1984 Britannia Hut celebration).

However, in 1969 I teamed up with an exploration group who had been able to get access into the Sinai Peninsula via Israel, after the 6-Day war, and I have wondered if any experiences of that area would interest members. Since I learned to "navigate" in Sinai, I must have been there more than thirty times, - travelling, walking, climbing, exploring, - and came to know the tracks as well as the Bedouin or the Israeli army.

My interest was and is the geography of the Exodus in the Old Testament. In this context I have combined research into a unique subject with enjoyment of the land, its wonderful mountains (with superb climbing), valleys, gorges and "desert" areas. I have certainly had all sorts of experience - from the early days when the territory was in its "raw state", then later, when it was under Israeli occupation, until 1982 when it became a "tourist attraction", - although the wild locations still remain remote and unvisited.

So I offer this note, feeling that climbers, - and not just "lecture-goers", may well be interested in knowing something of such a fascinating region as the Sinai mountains, - of which I have countless slides and photographs; and incidentally these bring the Bible texts remarkably to life.

Peter Farrington

After autumn walks on the Aonachs and Mamores (Am Bodach - An Gearanach) the following routes were snatched from a poor winter, mainly with Tony Perrons and Bil Gault: Sgurr a Bhac Chaolais - Sgurr na Sgine (a steep scramble up its south face in deteriorating weather). S.E. Ridge of Sgurr nan Gilleann (misty and icy). Sgurr a Chaorachain (Applecross). N.E. Ridge of Sgurr Fhuaran (in a misty white-out). A Ghlais-bheinn (a solo traverse from Bealach a Sgairne in wild conditions). Sguman Coinntich (from Killilan in shirt sleeves!).

Bad weather walks were made in Glens Attdale/Ling, Lichd - Camban, Bealach na Sroine/Falls of Glomach (knee deep snow), and over Carn Bad Chreamha via Coire Dhuinnid to Dornie.

In the early spring Beinn Bheithir was traversed from Ballachulish and Fraochaidh from Glen Creran on misty days. In better weather all the Arran ridges from a camp in Glen Rosa.

Amongst the usual outings on my local hills I made several ascents of the Paps of Jura, the most memorable being whilst competing in the annual Bens of Jura Fell Race. No less an event was the completion with Tony of a 3,000ft. traverse of the sea cliffs below the Monument at the Mull of Oa - a committing low level scramble spiced with cave exploration, pinnacles, abseils and short pitches up to severe.

In early October we completed a short tour of the Grande Dixence area starting at the Prafleuri Hut. A traverse of the Rosablanc to the Pantalons Blanc Bivouac was abandoned at the Col de Severeu after descending the south ridge, due to threatening weather and slow progress with heavy sacks. Above La Barma we came across the Cabane des Ecoulaies, owned by the Ski Club des Pyramides, empty and open to all, which was fortunate as it stormed and snowed overnight. That turned out to be the only hiccup in ten days of otherwise glorious weather. After climbing La Lurette from the Dix Hut we descended via the Pas de Chevres to Arolla. The Vignettes Hut was reached in darkness, having been unexpectedly delayed by a trailless approach up the Piece Glacier. However, the Winter-room to ourselves was ample compensation. The Pigne d'Arolla produced a fine icy climb and lived up to its reputation as an outstanding viewpoint. We arrived at the Aiguille Rouge Hut as the last guest to the hut's 50th anniversary party departed, leaving us in solitude. Some interesting glacier work on the Aiguille Rouge Sup. Gl. enabled us to traverse the Pte. de Darbonneire and Pte. de Vouasson, descending via the Vouasson Gl. After visiting the Lac Bleu we continued through Les Hauderes to Evolene. Finally the intended return to the Val d'Heremence over the Pic d'Artsinol had to be hastily cancelled when the Swiss army, out on manoeuvres, kindly ceased fire only long enough for us to scamper over the Col de la Meina.

(Attaining veteran status seems to have stimulated a burst of activity, he writes in a covering letter. No doubt about that. Ed).

David Jones

Two excursions into the Brecon Beacons in March; the first coincided with the only snow fall of the winter and gave us a much tougher walk than planned, and requiring more attention to map and compass than normally needed. As the days lengthened, the Mendip Hills helped us get fit, and going over to Cheddar meant the inevitable scramble in the Gorge en-route. And apart from training, climbing some of the "Classics" in the Avon Gorge during the year has re-awakened my enthusiasm for the cliffs.

A trip down to Dorset to meet Don Hardy (Monte Rosa) has become an annual fixture; either to climb at Swanage or trek the coastal paths. This year we walked to Lulworth Cove, trying a few 'traverse' pitches on the cliffs before going down to the village for tea.

In June Don and I were off to North Wales and Rhydd Ddu, joining Ben Suter and the ABM party at a very sociable meet. John Berry led us up two superb scrambles, dry rock in dry weather and in Wales! The climb on the north side of Glyder Fach took us up to the "Cantilever Rock". Next day the more energetic Parson's Nose was climbed.

I was unable to be with the club meet at Klosters but most of July and August was spent in the Alps. From the Val de Bagnes Le Parrain was climbed, then the Aig. du Tour from Trient Hut. From Sass-Fee the Allalin for acclimatisation, then the Strahlhorn because I did not climb it last year. The Dent du Fenestral, Luisin and Aig. de Loria were climbed from the Val du Trient. To keep in step with fine weather a number of passes were crossed, including the Prafleuri to the Dix Hut and the Pas de Chevres to Arolla. In the Lötöchental a few days were spent going from Kummenalp to Kanderstag via the Resti, Torrentalp and Gemmi Passes, staying at the Lammerenhut and Schwabenbach, and finally from Fischbiel over the Lötöschental pass.

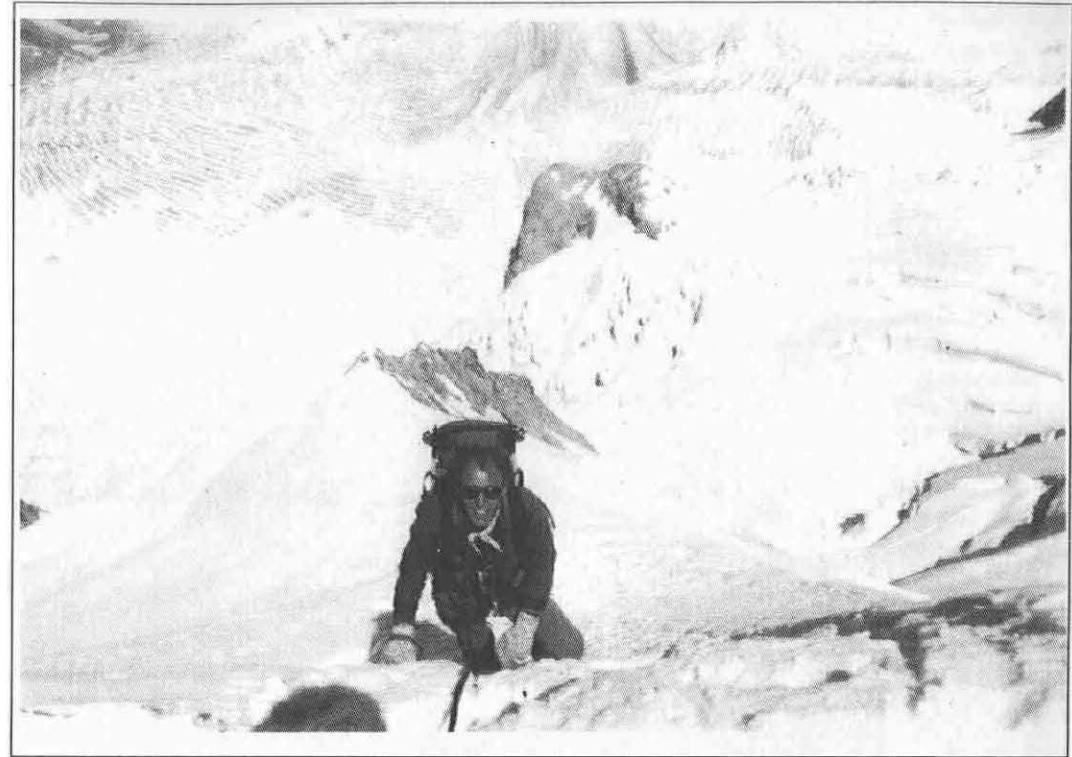
Wendell Jones

February and October 1989 brought visits to the long ridge of the Malverns, so prominent from the M5. It is a pleasant and airy place with only an occasional skirmish with suburbia.

Those same months brought contrasting visits to the Lake District. At the Northern Dinner Meet, memories of a hideous drive through rain, sleet and lorries, vanishing in glorious days on Striding Edge and High Street and of wallowing in three feet of new snow. The October Buffet Party Meet provided a more traditional fare of driving rain and low cloud. The M6 again was vile.

Spring produced a long weekend in Paris. We climbed Montmartre but used the lift to ascend the Eiffel Tower.

Summer gave Madeira, a delightfully unlevel island with 6,000ft. peaks visible at dawn, only to be obscured by daily mists. It touches off memories of sweet banana plantations nestling below 1,500ft. sea cliffs, of the espada fish caught a mile down and gracing the dinner table, of the long and spectacular levadas bringing life-giving water from the mountains, of a very friendly people and, alas, of a capital city where everything seemed a building site or traffic jam. Trips to the hills were complicated by logistic and personal problems. First I damaged a leg jumping over a chain-link fence. The second fall was more spectacular and ridiculous. Descending a mountain road some 15ft. wide, it seemed that two seven foot lorries and I were destined to a simultaneous meeting. There was no verge, thick bushes on one side, a parapet on the other. Having calculated the odds, I leapt on to the parapet, and landing on a leg not wholly restored to health, disappeared into the forest below. Fortunately a tree got in the way and a friendly lorry driver only moved off when I had scrambled back on to the road.



Opposite: Top: Terry McManus nearing summit of N. buttress, Piz Palù E. peak.

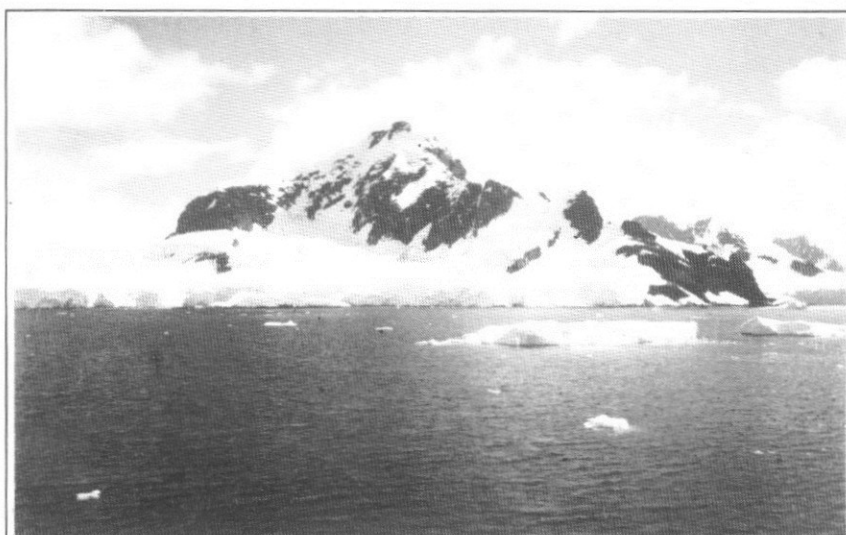
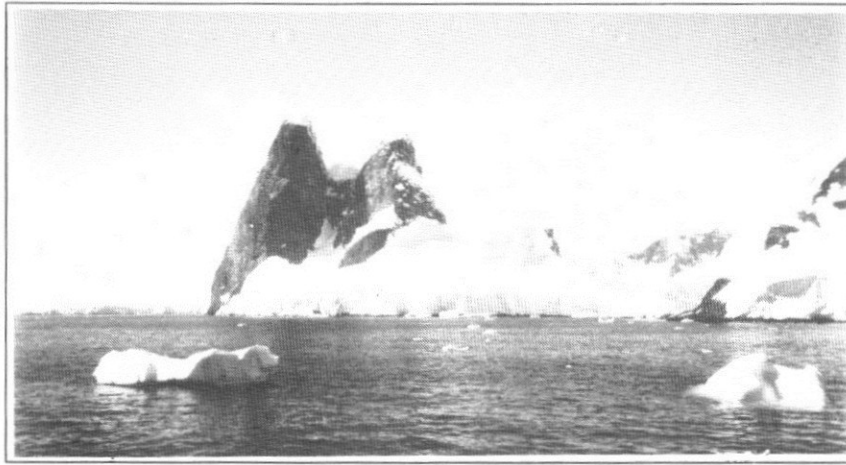
Bottom: North Wales Scrambles Meet, "Descending in warm sunlight from Glyder Fach after a wonderful, long-sustained and challenging route up the Cwm Bochlwyd face on heavenly rock, - rough and obviously little-frequented." (Ben Suter in July newsletter.)

Furthest South
(Patagonia and
the Antarctic
Peninsula)

The twin snow-capped peaks of Cape Renard at the entrance to the Lemaire Channel.

A colony of Blue-eyed Shags or Cormorants at Port Lockroy, Bellingshausen Sea.

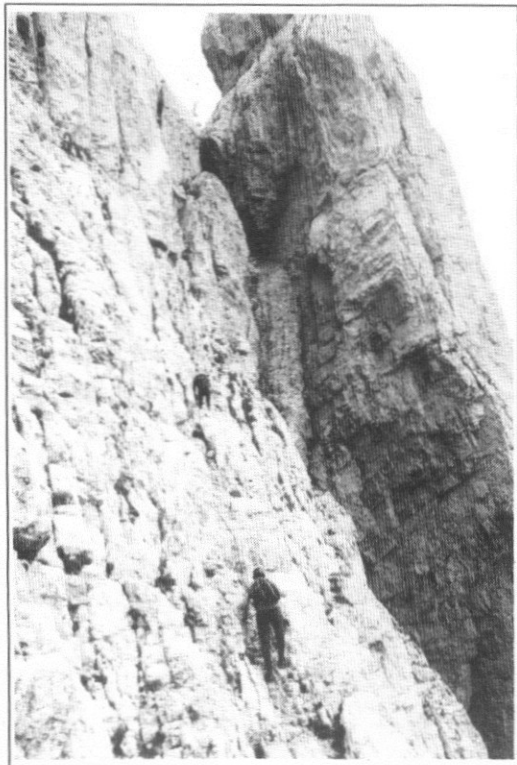
A typical view across Paradise Bay.



Climbing the route.



The summit end of the
flowery meadow along the top
of the mountain.
*Left to right - George Roger,
Oliver Turnbull,
Charles Warren.*



First glimpse of the mountain, from the south east, the evening before.

Klosters in July seemed greener and less severe than the Western Alps. The peaks were both lower and looser. Successful ascents included the Pischahorn, Fluella Schwartzhorn, Silvrettahorn, and Scarlattahorn; two or three further ascents died away in unrelenting white-outs. This time the only things that fell off were my crampons, and a cow, this bounded down out of the mists above the Vereina Haus. By morning it had gone; some said that it was already being consumed by the good people of Klosters, some that the author of the tale had himself dined too well.

G. B. Pennett

We began the year with a walk in Nidderdale on New Year's Day and later in January walked extensively in Nidderdale, Wharfedale and in Bronte country.

Then a week's holiday with each day walking from a different place, beginning with Malham and finishing with Settle. On a cold but sunny Good Friday we visited Clapham; on Easter Sunday and Monday we visited Bronte country; in May we enjoyed Bewerley Moor (Nidderdale) and the Middlesmoor area of Nidderdale. But the highlight of our year was a walk along the Cleveland Way, 112 miles through beautiful country and coastal scenery. It was a very hot week and we took our time, with sunbathing and sampling the local brew at pubs on the way.

In August we went to the Cambridge Cricket Festival where our son David was playing for the Yorkshire Under 19's cricket team. While there we managed the walk to Byron's Pool near Little Shelford, a local beauty spot. Later more walks in the Dales and on the Moors in September and October. Then a week at Shoregill at the foot of Wild Board Fell in Mellerstang in variable weather but one perfect warm Autumn day with clear blue sky when we climbed Wild Boar Fell (2,324ft.). It was a good choice and besides Wild Boar Fell we took in The Nab, with glorious views, Swarth Fell and Swarth Fell Pike.

Visits to the Bronte country once again in November, to Carleton Glen and Ramshaw and to Ingleton, taking in the Ingleton Glens and waterfalls. We completed the year with a walk from Hubberholme. The weather was kind except for the top of Buckden Pike and there were drinks and Yorkshire puddings at the White Lion at Cray.

Mike Pinney

Compared with 1988, when I had an exceptionally good Alpine Season but few memorable rock routes at home, the 1989 Alpine Season was disappointing, but balanced by many fine days rock climbing at home.

Before the Alps: Trips to Cornwall and the Wye Valley, and an exploratory visit with Marian Elmes to Pembrokeshire. The Spring Bank Holiday was in N. Wales, (Noah's Warning, Cobweb Crack, Ivy Sepulchre, and Cemetery Gates! on Dinas Cromlech, the Corner and Pedestal Crack on Cloggy and the Direct and Diagonal on Dinas Mot. The Rhyd-Ddu June meet however coincided with one of the few cold windy weekends and our annual pilgrimage to Cloggy resulted in a bone chilling ascent of Piggots.



John Clements (standing) and Nigel Walker in the Karwendel in 1974.



Marco Pallis in the 60s.

Courmayeur: After the Friday night/Saturday morning slog across to Italy, ten of us headed to the Fiorio Bivouac Hut and were delighted to have the main hut to ourselves. The following morning we set off in unpromising clouds and drizzle, but fortunately it cleared as we made our way to the summit of M. Doient; a good first peak at the junction of France, Switzerland and Italy.

Tuesday's cable car to the Torino slipped to early Wednesday morning due to the weather forecast and after booking in at the Hut we slogged across in the mid-morning heat to the Salle a Manger at the foot of the Dent du Geant. There we joined the queue to climb the rock and fixed rope to the top of the Geant. A late return to the hut for dinner.

Next morning back to the Salle a Manger, then along the Rochefort Arete to the Aiguille, followed by the more interesting Dome de Rochefort.

Saturday, Dick Murton and I left the hut at 2.00 a.m. and headed up the Miage glacier to the Durier Hut on the Col du Miage. The final part was somewhat loose, and an approach via the Domes de Miage is probably preferable. Daybreak saw us at the top of the Bionassay - the rock step, which we ended up climbing direct, was quite interesting in the dark! The east ridge was still frozen, a narrow arete, and 9.00 a.m. saw us at the top of M. Blanc. After a sit-down to soak in the atmosphere, Dick was the first to realise there was a danger of us falling asleep and we set off for M. Maudit and M. Blanc du Tacul. The summit of M. Maudit provided excellent views down its Tour Ronde ridge and the Brenva face of M. Blanc.

We were now on a Motorway. The AC guide mentions "Wooden stake for abseiling useful in crossing the bergschrund"! and a large number of parties were making the most of the sunny Saturday morning, so we had to queue at a couple of points. At other places we were able to divert from the trail and get past, and four four-thousanders and 12 hours from the hut brought us to the col du Midi. The guide book allows 14-22 hours for this traverse and with the loss of the Cosmiques Hut there is now no good accommodation for slow parties who miss the last cable car. Our options at the Col were: an hour's climb up to the Midi, followed by queuing for the expensive cable car to Pointe Helbronner or, our choice, the two hour walk across the Geant glacier in the hot sun to the Torino Hut. At the Torino, we each downed a litre of mineral water, then the cable car down, followed by effortless buses back to the camp site.

The weather deteriorated more and more. In the second week Marian Elmes and I achieved the Gran Paradiso, and the Grand Combin from the Valsorey Hut. The third week was exploratory walking in the Gran Paradiso National Park.

Sea - Cliff Climbing: Despite a typical wet bank holiday start, by the time we got to Holyhead, the sun broke through and the rock appeared dry. Wen Slab was crowded so we abseiled down to climb Britomartis. Then right of Wen Slab for the classic Dream of White Horses. Starting from the top of the original first pitch, I stepped down for about four feet before moving leftwards across the face with a couple of delicate steps. The second pitch meant a diagonal leftwards crack before it was possible to step across to belay in a chimney. Down a few feet and then a traverse leftwards under the roof on large holds and up to

belay. Here I was joined on the stance just as the sun set. We then made our way back with help from the lighthouse. Next day we returned, climbing Central Park and the Ramp on the main cliff.

The Sunday after, down to Swanage, where I had never done the Traverse of the Gods. Leaving rucksacks at Subluminal, and with favourable weather and tides, we headed past the lighthouse to the start of the traverse. The route starts dramatically. My partner led off on a steep finger traverse whilst I belayed from a low stance, with spray from the recently turned tide adding zest. Before I got too wet, my partner belayed and I started to climb. On reaching an in situ peg with a seized Karabiner, which my partner had backed up with a Friend, it rapidly became apparent that if I removed this protection I would be rather vulnerable. An Alpine solution was called for, i.e. to set up a pendulum. After removing the Friend and threading the rope back through the corroded Karabiner, I lowered myself until I could swing across to the next ledge. Then followed several pitches, varying from moving together to delicate traversing, with one further pendulum until we reached the point "Fall across the Zawn". Although both leader and second can be well protected, this was a committing move, involving leaning across the gap to obtain good handholds, before lowering one's feet and then hand traversing round the corner. Finally up to a ledge and a further pitch. From there, one either swims across Black Zwan to the Subluminal ledges, or, as we did, escapes up Mellow Yellow to the traverse. A quick lunch and a final 120ft. abseil into the easter Ruckle, from where we climbed Behemoth and the Golden Fleece. Another full day and with excellent climbing.

Harry Sales

Pat and Harry Sales climbed Pont Lenana on Mount Kenya in August. We tried from Chogoria, in the East, but our Landrover eventually got stuck in the mud. We drove round to Naro Moru and climbed from the less interesting side via the vertical bog, etc.

In October/November Harry climbed Mera (21,000) in Nepal. A party of 10, mostly C.C. or A.C., went in from Hille, north of Biratnagar, along the Arun, then across the Salapa Pass, across the Hunku valley, up the Hinku valley to the Mera La and up the mountain. Then out over the Zatrwala to Lukla and, with luck, a plane out. Hard going all the way!

Ernst Sondheimer

This year (in March) I treated myself to a quick dash to New Zealand's Fiordland, to walk the Routeburn Track. It was all organised, with superb efficiency, by New Zealand House in London. All I had to do (apart from paying up) was to pack my rucksack, get in the plane and relax... The Fiordland weather, of evil reputation, was reasonably kind, the evil sandflies were hardly in evidence, the company was agreeable - and the scenery quite stunning. A memorable experience indeed.

In May I took the car to Scotland, to load it with booty from alpine nurseries for my newly-constructed scree bed. A very agreeable week, which included the SMC Centenary Dinner in the banqueting hall at Blair Castle and a stay with Sir Edward and Lady Peck in their Cairngorm fastness near Tomintoul. Knowing the Pecks has considerable advantages for lazy collectors of remote Munros, as Ted Peck has the magic key which unlocks the gate which allows him to drive his Landrover to within 3 hours of the top of Ben Avon... These eastern Cairngorms are still wild and remote; on our ascent we saw many ptarmigan and few people, but were a bit too early for the purple flowering of the creeping birdcatcher (loiseleuria procumbens).

In summer there were two separate weeks in the Alps, both in unfriendly weather. In July I walked the ridge of the Pilatus in conditions which left the famous view to the imagination; a few days later we retreated from the modest Bishorn in a whiteout. No, I shall never complete the 4000ers (nor the Munros, for that matter). (Alasdair Andrews thought to tempt me with the title of his new book, describing the easy 4000ers - but I had to point out a mistranslation, not easy but easier...).

In September I was in the Alpstein, with Richard and Fabian, the two Swiss, a return to the Appenzellerland after more than 20 years. We enjoyed a beautiful ridge walk to the top of the Säntis where the weather broke with a spectacular thunderstorm; next day Richard had to hurry home because his house had been badly damaged by lightning. Even in bad weather this region of the Alps, little visited by the British, is very attractive; a whole mountain range in miniature, it has everything bar glaciers; there is good, varied walking, plenty of rock-climbing for those who prefer it, and comfortable, old-fashioned mountain inns to receive you at the end of the day. Finally, a November weekend at Nancy Smith's unique hostelry in Fersit, where, in the company of Alasdair and two doctors (all suffering from incurable Munros), one more item was added to the list...only 189 to go...

Les Swindin

Does an ascent of Great Gully on Crag Yr Ysfa in February count as a winter ascent? In most years the answer would probably be yes but in 1989 when I did it the answer was most definitely no. For the first winter since I started mountaineering I did not wear my crampons once. The mildest winter for many a year led to me doing a good deal of rock climbing, mostly in the easier grades but this early activity appeared to pay dividends later in the year. As early as March I had a day doing VS and HVS climbs at Tremadoc and later in the year managed to start leading E1 climbs on a fairly regular basis. My only disappointment as far as rock climbing was concerned is that most of the activity was on low level crags. Most trips to Wales, even in such a good summer, always seemed to coincide with rain, making climbing on the high crags out of the question. Nor did I do much on high Lakeland crags since my visits to the Lake District are becoming rare, on account of the traffic on the M5 and M6. In fact Dow Crag was the highest crag I climbed on in the summer.

In Scotland at Whitsun we saw more falling snow than we had seen during the winter months. This meant one very unpleasant bivouac whilst collecting a few more Munros. The weather, in fact, was not all bad and both Barabara and I increased our tally to just over the 200 mark.

In the Alps we had a thoroughly enjoyable Easter ski-tour in Eastern Switzerland. A couple of days doing day tours from a valley base in Cresta preceded a tour taking us to the Janatsch Hut and on to Bergun and then the Kesch Hut, the Grialetsch Hut and finally the Silvretta Hut. On the way we climbed to 11 summits, but more significant was the fact that we had now completed the traverse of Switzerland on skis. Only France and Austria to go now to complete the traverse of the Alps!

The summer season in the Alps was much less successful. We joined the joint clubs meet in the Val Veni and climbed Mont Dolent as a training route before doing the Tour Ronde, Dent du Geant (Barbara's 46th 4000er), Grand Paradiso and an attempt on the Aiguille Blanche de Peuterey. The attempt was a failure due to the ponderous nature of a large party. To my mind this is one peak in the Alps that needs to be climbed quickly and efficiently.

Association Activities

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at the Alpine Club, South Audley Street, London, at 6.45 p.m. on Wednesday 6th December 1989.

Vice President Mr. Wendell Jones was in the chair, and thirty eight members were present.

1. Apologies for absence were received from the President, the Honorary Treasurer, Lord and Lady Hunt, Professor R.K. Brocklehurst, Mr. J. Baldwin and Mr. W.B. Midgeley.
2. The Minutes of the 1988 AGM, as published in the Journal, were accepted. There were no matters arising.
3. Election of Officers and Committee. All officers were elected unopposed.

Mr. J.W.S. Dempster was elected to the Committee, with a vacancy for one other member in place of Mr. D.F. Penlington and Mr. A. Strawther, who retired in rotation.

Miss Marian Engler, First Secretary at the Swiss Embassy, has accepted the invitation to be a co-opted member of the Committee in place of Mr. P. Welte who has returned to Switzerland. The meeting approved this invitation and welcomed Miss Engler.

The new Committee will be:

Mrs. B. Baldwin	Mrs. H. Eddowes
J.W. Chapman	A. Lock
J.W.S. Dempster	G.G. Watkins
B.F. Dolling	A.N. Other
Miss M. Engler (Co-opted)	

4. The Vice President spoke briefly about the accounts which showed a healthy position, mainly due to reductions in costs of producing the Journal and Newsletters. Subscriptions were up by nearly £200 due to new members.

It was pointed out that there will be an increase in costs in the future due to leaving the South Audley Street premises and having to hire other rooms.

The adoption of the accounts was proposed by Mr. M. Bennett, seconded by Mr. J.P. Ledeboer and passed unanimously.

5. Subscriptions: The Committee's proposal that the subscriptions should remain unchanged was adopted unanimously. Proposer Mrs. M. Boulter, seconded Mrs. B. Baldwin.

£10 for Ordinary and Associate Members
£14 for Joint Membership; £5 for Junior Members.

6. Annual Report: The President's report was read out by the Chairman.

"It has been a very active and successful year for the Association. Membership has increased slightly but it is important to our future that every member is a recruiting agent, particularly for younger people. During the year 43 new members joined the Association, 17 as full SAC members and 26 as Associate members.

Amongst those who died, mention should be made of John Clements. He had been a member since 1939, and participated actively in ABM meets in former years.

During the year there were 2 Swiss meets, 5 Scottish meets, 8 English and Welsh climbing meets plus 8 indoor meetings. There were also 3 well attended walks in the home counties. The Northern Dinner, splendidly organised by Arlene and Brook Midgeley, was well attended as usual and was greatly entertained by John Barry's irreverent humour as the main after-dinner speaker. The Association Annual Dinner was held in London on 29th October and attended by 75 members and guests. All said what a good evening it had been, and that they particularly enjoyed the speeches by Lord Hailsham and the new Swiss Ambassador, Franz Muheim. Two representatives of the Central Committee came over from Switzerland for the occasion, Annamarie Heule, Vice President of the SAC, and Peter Eichenberger who looks after insurance matters on the Central Committee.

The thanks of all are due to the various people who organised and led these various events.

At last year's AGM I said that we were exploring the possibility of purchasing the freehold of the Patterdale Hut. Negotiations were carried out, but unfortunately, the owners of the freehold, Patterdale Parochial Council, finally decided that they did not wish to sell. It was not a question of price; they just would not sell. This does not mean that we will necessarily lose the hut when the present lease expires in a decade's time because we do have certain rights of renewal. However, there can be no certainty that when that time comes renewal will be possible on terms that we could then afford.

The other major development during the year was that the Alpine Club decided to give up its premises at South Audley Street; consequently the present meeting is the last which we will be able to hold here. An intensive search for new premises has resulted in an agreement with the Royal Institute of Naval Architects. Our January meeting will, therefore, be in their lecture hall at 10 Upper Belgrave Street. It should be said that it was not at all easy to find premises which were both suitable to our needs and at a cost within our means. There is no shortage of halls, but most are extremely expensive. We must count ourselves lucky that it was possible to strike a good deal with the RINA.

It remains only for me to thank all those who have contributed to this successful year. To Wendell for chairing this meeting and other assistance during the year, to Peter Ledeboer for help

with the Annual Dinner and the new meeting accommodation, to all the meet leaders with particular emphasis on Harry Archer and his team of helpers with the Klosters meet, to Ben Suter for organising the outdoor meets programme and helping out Rudolf Loewy with the Editorial work, and to Mary Boulter, Joan Whyte and all the other ladies who have produced such marvellous catering for our indoor London meetings. There are so many to thank, and we are grateful to them all. The success of any club or society is critically dependent on the enthusiasm of its volunteers, and in this regard we are very fortunate.

And now I hope you will all enjoy the social evening which is to follow this AGM, and to wish you a very Happy Christmas".

FAREWELL TO SOUTH AUDLEY STREET

And salute to Maurice Bennett

The Annual General Meeting in December was our last Meeting at the Alpine Club's famous home in South Audley Street. This, the Social Committee considered, clearly called for a party. And it happened to be Maurice Bennett's 75th birthday, so it was also an excellent opportunity to mark all that Maurice has done for the club for so long.

While the "spread" was being prepared there was an amusing photographic quizz, "Who was that and where was it?", in which members had to identify obscurely or strangely depicted members in unusual surroundings, - the slides having been selected by Ben Suter and Frank Solari. Finally Maurice and Bertha cut a fine birthday cake, made in the form of the Swiss National flag.



Obituaries

John Clements

John Clements died in July last year in his late seventies. He joined the Association in 1939 and was a member of Section Interlaken. During his membership of the Association he made many friends amongst whom I was proud to include myself.

I first met John at Easter 1964 when the Association met at Onich, and it was on the Eanoch Egoch Ridge that I experienced first hand his companionship and friendship as a climber. A great character and great fun to be with in the mountains. I was, at the time, a comparatively new member to the Association and it was John who introduced me to simple rock climbing. John always seemed to favour the rock climbs as opposed to the glacier climbs, which is why he enjoyed those years when I took him to Mittenwald in West Germany to climb in the Karwendels. His wonderful sense of humour, his knowledge of rock climbing, will be remembered by those who knew him.

His "trade mark" of a dirty bright red anorak, baggy dark brown corduroy climbing breeches and a woollen bob ski hat will always remain with him. The passing of John will leave some happy memories for those who knew him.

Nigel Walker

Mrs A.M. Barton

The death has recently been reported of Alison Barton, whose late husband, Dr A.W. Barton, was President of the Association from 1963 to 1965. Both Arthur Barton and Alison were regular supporters of the Easter Meets and the Alpine Meets for many years, although Alison did not become a member of the Association because at the material times it was not possible for ladies to join.

Arthur Barton was a distinguished Headmaster of City of London Boys' School and Alison was very supportive of him both in that capacity and as President of the Association. The Bartons came to climbing somewhat late in life but they were enthusiastic and energetic and achieved a number of major Alpine peaks over a period of some ten years. Alison became a member of the Ladies Alpine Club and when that Club merged with the Alpine Club her membership was transferred to the latter Club, of which Arthur was already a member.

Alison proved herself to be a competent climber with guided parties. She had a lively and friendly personality which helped to make the climbing Meets she attended such enjoyable occasions and to make new members feel at home. All who knew Alison will have very happy memories of her.

M.B.

Marco Pallis

Although not a member of the Himalayan Club, Marco Pallis was such an important Himalayan traveller and mountain climber, and one who wrote one of the most attractive books ever written about Himalayan mountain travel, "Peaks and Lamas". His death at the age of 93 calls for notice.

Marco, as he was always known to his friends, was a well known personality in British mountaineering circles in the nineteen twenties and thirties. He climbed both at home and in the European alps and Himalayas. In England he was on the first ascent of Mickledore Grooves, and an early ascent of the famous and very hard Central Buttress on Scawfell Crag. But it was Marco's pioneering of the small expedition to the Himalaya, and its nowadays so called alpine-style climbing there, which attracted attention. In 1933 he led a small party of five climbers to the Gangotri glacier region in Terhi Garhwal where a first ascent was made of the hard Baghirati 3 (in those days called Central Satopanth through lack of proper maps). Thereafter some of us stayed on and crossed the Nela pass with him and descended the Baspa river to its junction with the Sutlig. We then followed this almost to its source before turning off to reach the unclimbed mountain Rio Pargial, on the Indo-Tibetan frontier, which Marco and I then climbed.

Soon after that the War put an end to most climbing, but before that happened Marco made one more excursion into the Sikkim Himalaya. After the War he managed to get into Tibet. All his expeditions were centred around his consuming interest in the Tibetan culture and language. After his last expedition into Tibet he really gave up mountaineering as an interest and concentrated on his two great loves: old music and Tibetan studies. A pupil of Arnold Dolmetch he played in a consort of viols in London, and up until his death he was composing an opera on the theme of the great Tibetan teacher Milarepa.

Tibet and its way of life and culture always remained his main love and in this he supported the Dalai Lama when he was in England.

But Marco Pallis! A household name amongst most mountaineers of my generation. A very gentle, gifted and most lovable man.

Charles Warren

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The National Press paid tribute to Marco Pallis in a number of fine obituaries.

The Telegraph spoke of him as one of the most remarkable figures to have graced the periphery of mountaineering this century. His book "Peaks and Lamas" it considers one of those curious delights in mountain literature. Of The Way and the Mountain, it sees it as expounding a theme in which mountaineering is taken virtually as a spiritual metaphor. "Musician and Seer" the Guardian describes him, - one of his post-war books, written in Tibetan, foresaw the Chinese invasion in 1951. And the Independent concludes: "... he was and remains a great teacher - one might also say prophet - who made sense of life and of the life to come..."

Finally, a reminiscence of Marco Pallis at 54 Seymour Street, that unique mountaineering emporium of Robert Lawrie's which was more an unofficial club where talking about climbs and climbers came way before attending to matters of boots and equipment. Marco had brought back a Tibetan Lama to stay with him and one day they came to Seymour Street. Soon Marco and his friend, and Rob and one or two others in the shop, as well as Ursula and Elsie Lane, were sitting in a circle on the carpet, Tibetan fashion, happily and unconcernedly talking. Then the Lama was shown Rob's famous boots and other equipment, including the then usual X-ray machine for checking the fit of the boots you tried. Of course it fascinated the Lama to see his toes wriggling inside the boot, so much so that he asked if he might put his head in the machine "to see if I have any brains!"