CLIMBER &rambler

Make sure you're up to date on the latest events in the world of climbing by receiving Climber & Rambler every month for just £8.00 incl. post & packing. Order your yearly subscription by filling in and returning the coupon below.

> Please send me the next 12 issues of Climber and Rambler at the cost of £8.00 incl. post and packing

NAME ...

Cheques/P.O. should be made payable to Holmes McDougall Ltd. Send the completed coupon to: Holmes McDougall Ltd., Subscription Dept., Climber & Rambler, 10/12 York Street, Glasgow G2.

THE ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH MEMBERS OF THE SWISS ALPINE CLUB

JOURNAL 1980

CONTENTS

Editorial Odd thoughts on an odd Pastime by Hamish M. Brown	3 5
A walk to Devil's Mountain by Gordon Gadsby	. 9
A return to the mountains by Derek Lambley	12
A few Swiss Classics by Les Swindin	15
On Curves of Freedom by Jeremy Whitehead	19
Association Activities	22
The Annual General Meeting	
Associate Accounts	23
The Annual Dinner	
The Outdoor Meets	26
Members' Climbs and Excursions	31
Book Review Correspondence	39
Complete List of Members	41
List of Past and Present Officers	



EDITORIAL

This issue of the Journal is slimmer than usual, for harsh economic reasons, not because it is the wish of the editor or anyone else. The result has been achieved by refraining from chasing contributors, by cutting down on photographs and by pruning some regular features. Sincere apologies are offered.

Continuing the economic theme, it will have struck most members that the S.A.C. is an expensive club for the British. This has come about for reasons of State beyond the control either of the S.A.C. or the A.B.M. We have become more concerned than before because of a possibility that some form of rights in Swiss huts may be extended by about 1980 to all member clubs of the B.M.C. with no special concessions for the A.B.M. This would call into question the very raison d'être of the Association. Considerable efforts have been made this year to find ways to ease the burden of expensive fees. We had special and particular help from His Excellency Dr. E. Thalmann, The Swiss Ambassador, now an honorary member of the A.B.M., and from M. Jacques Rial of the Embassy, who have had private conversations with influential people in Switzerland.

M. Rial wrote a paper which offered several lines of approach and which was discussed at our June committee meeting. Five possibilities were considered.

1. Since S.A.C. fees vary from Section to Section, we could try to join the cheaper Sections. This is practicable for new members, and is strongly advised by the Central Committee of the S.A.C. A wholesale switch by established members would almost certainly provoke trouble, either by causing dissent between Sections or by contravening rules about the permissible proportions of non-Swiss members. Administrative problems would be created at the Swiss National Tourist Office, particularly as the A.B.M. has a special arrangement with certain Sections.

2. We have established Affiliate Membership of the A.B.M. The purposes of this were to stimulate home activities (already strengthened by the acquisition of the George Starkey hut and our consequent fruitful cooperation with the Tuesday Climbing Club) and to provide a pool of aspirant members who might join the S.A.C. when happier circumstances arise. This enterprise has started well, but no way can be seen to extend its scope for the time being. In any case it will not solve money problems, but may help the Association to remain healthy and poised to expand again as an A.B.M.S.A.C. when the time comes.

3. We might cease to take "Les Alpes" and thereby negotiate a reduced subscription. Members are divided about this, and in any case it is totally contrary to the present rules of the C.C.

4. A class of "country members" of the S.A.C. might be created. This seems morally justified on the grounds that we get less return for our subscriptions than do members resident in Switzerland. A conceivable procedure would be direct affiliation to the C.C. instead of to a Section, so that our annual fee might be reduced to that share which goes to the C.C. This again is quite contrary to the rules of the S.A.C., and might appear to undermine the basic principle that the S.A.C. is a federation of autonomous Sections.

5. We might establish a British Section of the S.A.C. The Embassy and the S.N.T.O. would welcome this idea. The creation of a Section has to be approved by the assembly of delegates of the S.A.C., and a Section outside Switzerland would be a novelty. Matters might be eased if Swiss nationals resident in Britain (especially any who may already be members of the S.A.C.) could be located and invited to join the A.B.M. This is one of the few possibilities over which we might be able to take some action on our own part.

Paddy Boulter and Peter Ledeboer sacrificed part of their Alpine Meet to visit the President elect of the S.A.C. and had a cordial and helpful reception. A further visit was made to Thun on the occasion of the Annual Assembly of the S.A.C. Further progress was made towards finding a solution, perhaps on the lines of possibility 5 above, and there the matter rests for the moment. Attention is drawn to the report on the October meet at Patterdale. This was less well attended than would have been wished. The unusual arrangement of a buffet meal in the hut was a total success; it will be repeated in 1980, and we hope for wide support. In further connection with meets, please see Alisdair Andrews's note p.31. To help memories, the 1980 fixtures are set out on the back cover in cut-out form.

A point about the address list. Our source of information is the S.N.T.O., who are unlikely to make mistakes in matters that lie within their province. Neither they nor the editor have any means of knowing who has become a veteran member, except by guessing from the dates. The editor would welcome advice on this and other attributions, as for instance members who have been awarded the V.C. or made peers.



ODD THOUGHTS ON AN ODD PASTIME

Hamish M. Brown

"Reminiscenses are the old man's substitute for action," I was once told but I doubt if the speaker knew the elders of the A.B.M. They happily seem to combine both action and reflection. No doubt the editor wishes a few more of them would write down their actions!

I came to the Alps almost grudgingly for I had grown up with the freedom of the Scottish hills and felt no desire for anything else. I never regarded the Alps as something to work towards, something "better", and to this day I smile when I hear people say "When I'm experienced enough I'd like to climb in the Alps" ... where do they think the Swiss begin or gain their experience? We see no greater proportion of British climbers heading to the Alps despite all our freedoms and pamperings. Imagination is not provided under any state hand-out. In education circles I once heard the term "simulated adventure" used!

As a bookworm I slowly burrowed my teenage years through ample vicarious experiences besides the home reality but it was only years later that a teacher's long holidays made a visit to the Alps actually happen. The books came alive then, books which laid the ground for my ideas and ideals to this day: Janet Adam Smith's "Mountain Holidays", Frank Smythe's "Climbs and Ski Runs", Kugy's "Alpine Pilgrimage", Eric Shipton's "Upon That Mountain". Two of us went to Arolla as thousands have before and since.

They were churning up the hills there for Hydro schemes, just as at home; we camped, just as at home, and just as at home the local cows made havoc of our tents one day. The insurance company actually queried my claim that a primus stove had been largely eaten by a cow, but it was! When my partner went home I followed the lure of the Matterhorn, which we had been looking at so often, and went to Zermatt. Necessity had me team up with a young guide to climb it; up and down in 4½ hours. It was like Collie's Climb in Coire Lagan. "Going to Zermatt"; the phrase sets the itch to our feet. By the train, screeching up from the Rhône, or over peaks and passes, the magic never fails. I think it was Lunn who said something like "the remedy for boredom and the restraints of daily work is a railway ticket to Martigny."

I frequently land in hot water by suggesting the actual physical climbing is the same whether performed in Scotland, the Alps or the ends of the earth. We go to far away places for the differences, for mental stimulus. Were it purely physical no one would even need Stanage, a concrete wall would do. "Only a hill; but all of life to me, up there between the sunset and the sea." Young put it: "I will never love the cold Cervin as I do An Teallach or childhood Ochils. Hills, mountains, are as the heart makes them." The Matterhorn is equally dream and reality.

Sometimes the dream can teeter into nightmare. This is not football where a mistake may lose a goal — on the hill you may lose all — and the "pitch" is rather different. Strange how even in the worst the inner comes out. A seventeen hour traverse of the Matterhorn in storm is chiefly remembered now for my young companion holding out a soggy cigarette to the lightning flashes as his matches were wet. On another occasion two friends on the peak heard stones falling and turned to run in opposite directions, forgetting they were roped together. No, it never does to take the game too seriously, something we increasingly need to shout back at the busybodies who would like to organise and protect us out of our own.

I think it was our third season in the Alps we spent most of the summer in Janet Adam Smith country: the Vanoise, Tarentaise and Maurienne and it was still sufficiently undeveloped that we climbed from haylofts and cowshed. Super Tignes and such architectural vandalism was still to come, though to be fair, even in the month of August, if one is prepared to wander off the beaten track, there is a landscape of peace and quiet. From the 1973 A.B.M. Meet at Saas Fee the campers climbed undisturbed on



the frontier ridge, then crossed the Antronapass to Antronapiana, and in eleven hours only met one surprised shepherd leading his flock through the woods — where we ate ourselves silly on blaeberries.

It was chance led me to join the S.A.C. rather than any other ("it has such a nice badge") but it soon became an unlapsing choice no matter for how long or far the separations, nor how inflated the subscription! If the gangrel in me leads off for the quieter, remoter ranges like Norway, Corsica, Pyrenees, High Atlas of Morocco, every now and then there has to be Switzerland for its comfortable reassurances. As long as the Matterhorn stands clear and clean there is still some faith left in man. We have done such things to so many other peaks, mountains, hills....

What an odd, obsessive form of escapism the mountains are. No logic explains the lure. It is all self-indulgent fun, a shocking thing in this grey world of the lowest common denominator. Just try explaining why you climb. On a traverse of the McGillycuddy Reeks in Ireland a party of kids and I came on an old man building a shrine. He had carried cement, water, ladder and paints up 3,000 feet — yet saw no sense in our pastime, however much the youngsters tried to explain. (In despair one of them finally pointed at me and said, "Well, he does it for money. Gets paid to take us," to which the old man said, "Ah well, that's all right then.")

Come to think of it, from Burgener to Bonington we have had people carving out careers in the game, yet no one essentially climbs for money; the core of things is still a man's dreams and the giving of legs to them. If you were to whisper: "Titlis, Pälu, Dom, Bietschhorn" it would mean nothing to millions, much to a few, and a great deal to an individual. It was one summer a dozen years ago for me, when "legs and lungs were younger then and skies a bluer blue"! At a dull dinner once two of us played a game of mentioning a mountain name, turn about, to be followed by silences in which we indulged in nostalgic recall, then shared our memories.

The harder we play at anything the more serious they become. There are climbing controversies which fill pages of print which the public have never read. Perhaps we should turn British Leyland into a game! How dull cosy uniformity would be. Mountaineering is a flower, a complex *umbellifera* of many heads, each happy and beautiful in itself and forming a sturdy plant. What could be odder than an association of alpinists out walking the South Downs? A far cry from the Cervin? Just a whisper away.

The snore-loud, airless dormitory has fifty in places for thirty, rocks of bodies, wet clothes, stale food, wine, is acrid with smoke, creaks in the storm, breathes, is sleeping and sleepless . . . Kaleidescopic are our memories, our doings, our lives. We make it all romance. Hobnails and holidays. Vibrams and vacations. The names change but the game goes merrily on. Old men dream dreams and young men see visions. Now is the best of all.



A WALK TO DEVIL'S MOUNTAIN

Gordon Gadsby

Easter Day on Deeside dawned bright and clear, and here in the great pine forests that surround the Linn of Dee we had the promise of a good day. The gale force winds that had swept across Britain for the last two weeks were strangely subdued. The chatter of the forest birds could be heard clearly for the first time in days. Two red squirrels darted across the thin carpet of fresh snow outside the tents, then froze in characteristic manner on the trunk of a nearby tree. They watched us mischievously whilst a pall of mist slowly rose from the trees beyond the campsite. As the greyness lifted it revealed two fine stags eyeing us intently as we prepared for our trek to the heart of the Cairngorms.

The five of us, Ken and Chris Bryan, Alan Squires, Peter Beresford and I had planned our expedition the night before over a pint in the cosy bar of nearby Mar Lodge. If the tops were reasonably clear when we reached the Luibeg burn we would traverse Ben Macdhui via the ridge of Sron Riach, returning by the Lairig Gru Pass and the pools of Dee. If Ben Macdhui was out of the question we would make a decision at Luibeg bridge. One way or the other, whether we went high or kept low, we were all keen to see this remote part of the Cairngorms after the heaviest snowfalls for 30 years.

The sky over Braemar was still tinged with pink as we set off along the good track towards Derry Lodge. Each of our sacs was well stocked with a variety of food plus spare clothes, crampons, ice axe, gloves, snow goggles etc., whilst Ken also carried the rope. We were ready for anything and expecting at least a twelve hour day.

A tiny bat circled round and round us on that first mile of track, then a large herd of red deer crossed the glen in front of us and headed for the slopes of Sgur Dubh. On the high ground just before Black bridge, young Chris shouted excitedly from the head of the party. "Look, we can see one of the snow peaks." It was the three thousand seven hundred foot Derry Cairngorm, completely plastered in new snow. Seen through a clearing in the ancient pine forest with several stags in the foreground, it made a perfect landscape picture. "Is it one of the big ones?" asked Alan, focussing his camera. I assured him that it wasn't. A few minutes later, however, we did see one, namely Stob Coire Sputan Dearg 4095' the second highest top of the Macdhui group.

We continued our journey over Black bridge then northwards up Glen Lui. On the fringe of the trees before Derry Lodge we spotted another herd of deer; two of them were rearing on their hind legs and sparring as kangaroos sometimes do. As I captured the moment on film, I realised I was gaining the rewards of bringing my 200mm lens along, despite the extra weight!

There were a few mountain tents situated by the Derry burn behind the Lodge, which was all shuttered up. It was an idyllic spot to camp, but you would have to carry the gear at least four miles from the nearest road. One by one we crossed the narrow wooden bridge over the burn, then carefully picked our way across the very marshy ground between the confluence of the two rivers. We were entertained on our way by the spectacular courtship display of a pair of lapwings, twisting and turning in the morning sunlight.

In less then ten minutes we reached the snow covered higher track beyond the keeper's cottage and looking back we could see that the clouds were already gathering over Lochnagar, the Queen's mountain, above Braemar. Once we had crossed the low spur of Carn Crom we were on a level walk for a mile or two. The snow was deep though, and every few steps the frozen upper crust would collapse, making it a trying walk.

The sun was still sparkling across the snowfields as Chris, Pete and I reached the metal footbridge across the Luibeg burn. The bridge was almost unnecessary as just beyond it the burn was completely blocked by enormous drifts of snow thirty to forty feet deep. From a vantage point on the west side of the bridge we waited for Ken and Alan to

catch us up. Ken had broken his leg some months ago and this was his biggest trial yet. Chris watched him anxiously. "Is it going to be alright Dad?" he asked. "Ay, but it's hurting a bit," grunted Ken. "Never mind, though, the weather is making up for it." Alan stepped across the bridge and climbed the steep snow bank to join us. "Is Ben Macdhui on then, Gordon?" he asked. I looked up the dark shadowed cwm behind the Luibeg bridge; although we were in sunshine and sheltered from any wind, the heights of Sron Riach and Macdhui above the cwm were being attacked by fast moving waves of snow-laden clouds. It was blizzard conditions on the tops and I think we all knew it! "No, it's not on," I replied, "at least not for me." (Having traversed Cairngorm and Ben Macdhui in an arctic style blizzard some years ago, before reaching the haven of the Shelter Stone beside Loch Avon, I personally had no intention of repeating that performance). The others agreed that conditions up there did look bad and in all probability would only get worse.

"Let's do the Lairig Gru then," suggested Alan. "We can get as far as we can and make sure we turn back in time to get home before dark." It was agreed, we would walk over into Glen Dee along the most famous highland track in Scotland. We tramped towards the shallow col between Carn a'Mhaim 3329' and Creagan nan Gabhar, a col which would lead us into Glen Dee. On looking back we could see the snow clad hills around Glen Luibeg and Glen Lui were shrouded in an ominous blackness, a blackness accentuated by the azure blue of the sky immediately above us. It was one of those days, storm and tempest, sunshine and shadow, all rolled into one glorious bundle of mountain weather. And yet we seemed to possess the luck of the Gods with our own little anti-cyclone following us around. In fact, due to the dazzling sunlight on the snow, Chris and I were already wearing our sun goggles.

As we neared the cairn marking the col there was no sign of any track, just a great white expanse into which we sank wearily at every other step. Suddenly a fierce blast of wind hit us head on, whipping up the fresh powder snow and throwing it in repeated waves against us. The surprise rush of wind flushed out a flock of grouse from some nearby rocks and they went scurrying this way and that into the very teeth of the gale. At first they seemed unable to take off, then one after another in a flash of red and dark brown they zoomed away to our left, skimming across the snow uttering cries that sounded like 'Ready Brek, Brek, Brek!' Chris, Pete and I continued towards the cairn, the wind dropped to a mere gentle breeze and the magnificent prospect of Glen Dee opened before us.

"Look at that for a peak," gasped Chris pointing with his axe. It was the Devil's Point, stunningly beautiful as it emerged from giant wind driven cobwebs of mist and cloud. The last time I'd seen it, it had just appeared as a dark pointed peak amongst snow covered neighbours, but from this viewpoint with the higher peaks covered in clouds it seemed of majestic proportions. When Ken and Alan reached us they too were captured by the beauty of the mountain. Without more ado we changed our plans, the Lairig Gru would have to wait for another year, the lure of Devil's Point was too strong.

We were an excited group as we made our way down the flanks of Cairn a'Mhaim; with a little luck we would snatch the plum and possibly get a good view as well. As we rounded the bend before the final descent to the river we could see straight up the Glen to where the massive slopes of Braeriach 4248' and Ben Macdhui 4300' swept down to meet at the Lairig Gru pass 2733'. It was white-out conditions up there with just the odd fleeting patch of sunshine crossing the great snowfields. Nearer to us and in sunshine was the climbers' haven called Corrour Bothy, a small stone cottage which has already survived a hundred Cairngorm winters. Nine miles from the Linn of Dee, it was originally built to house a deer watcher to check on the movements of deer in Glen Dee in 1877. The cottage was completely refurbished around 1950 and since then has accommodated a multitude of mountain travellers from the most famous to the complete novice. In summer the bothy is hard to detect against the rough terrain, but today it stood out with a backcloth of snow.

We crossed the Dee by the iron bridge erected in 1960 and after a five minute plod through deep snow we entered the sturdy shelter. The simple room with a large

fireplace was festooned with sleeping bags and brightly coloured waterproofs; the floor was wet and uninviting. We stepped outside for our lunch. The time was 12.45 p.m. Half an hour later we were on our way up Coire Odhar with the snow improving at every step.

Ken was moving well despite the pain from his leg. "Shall we do Cairn Toul as well?" he asked. I looked across to our right, a seemingly endless blanket of grey cloud was sweeping across below the 3000' contour completely blocking out the sky. I didn't need to answer, the weather would be the deciding factor. As we climbed higher Chris pointed to the tremendous cornices on either side of the burn that flows down the corrie. They were of alpine proportions and quite spectacular.

We were now about eight hundred feet from the summit in a direct line. The easiest way, however, would be via the col, but I noticed a shallow gully on this north flank of the mountain. It looked a sporting way to the top. Chris led the way up the easy angled gully which was about seven hundred feet long with three short icy steps about mid-height. The snow was excellent but unsuitable for crampons although the axes were very useful. At the third step we disturbed two ptarmigan; they swooped away into the corrie, white shapes against the grey, cloud-filled cwm. The last time I'd seen two was on Meal Odhar in 1971. Above us the sun was highlighting the upper rim of the gully whilst racing clouds on either side threatened to extinguish it.

Another fifteen minutes and we were being blown along the corniced summit ridge by the westerly gale. The actual top was a complete snow cap with just the rocks of the cairn breaking the skyline. We had one brief view down Glen Dee and nearby Glen Gausachan (Glen of Pines). It was hard to believe that these now treeless valleys were once heavily forrested, or that the forest once covered almost the whole of the Lairig Gru. Before we could take it all in the clouds were upon us; we fought the wind back along the ridge; Cairn Toul was forgotten. Fierce winds whipped up the snow on the lip of the corrie. There was no cornice but everywhere was so white; it seemed incredibly steep. It wasn't! and soon we were plunging down in the deep snow away from the wind.

It was a silent world in Coire Odhar, the clouds settled around us and then it started to snow. The flakes came thick and gentle, soon we were like strange ghosts moving in a white world. It cleared briefly as we passed Corrour and we saw the climbers returning from the hill shaking their clothes before entering. Heavy snow followed us across the iron bridge and up the hillside — what price Cairn Toul now!

We reached the signpost on the Lairig track, the snow stopped and the southern skies started to clear. Instead of going back the way we had come we decided to go beneath the towering crags of Beinn Bhrotain and the Chest of Dee, a beautiful deep pool with towering rocks and tumbling water. It was two miles longer than the Derry Lodge track but more than compensated in delightful views (especially looking up river).

Good weather remained with us the rest of the way. We had a last orange at White bridge and after passing the Linn of Dee we entered the great Forest of Mar. Above the trees the evening sky was streaked with pink cloud. As we strode up to the tents my young sons, Richard and Peter, came running across the clearing to greet us. It was a perfect end to a fabulous day.

A RETURN TO THE MOUNTAINS, Or Geriatric Mountaineering With A Car

Derek Lambley

Every year since 1938, though excluding the war years, I have enjoyed my mountain holiday. Plans were laid from September onwards and schemes were hatched not only after regular committee meetings of the Association at the A.C., but also at the regular meets. In 1972 all this was suddenly changed. I was walking down the corridor of the Hospital where I then worked after finishing a short operating list at a small private hospital nearby. I collapsed very conveniently outside the Intensive Care Unit and woke up six days later inside — lucky indeed to be alive. I was as it happened in the middle of the otherwise enjoyable three year period as President of the Association, and I had set my path to the bringing to fruition the Hut project in Patterdale. Further medical problems followed, and eventually I was told that too much high alpine mountaineering in the short period each year had produced permanent dilation of my aortic valve; and I would have to submit to a replacement. I followed this advice. Naturally I was told to take life quietly. Gentle walks, possibly no driving and no active surgery was to be my lot. The operation was at the end of October 1972. In early February I commenced salmon fishing again, sitting in perishing cold and wet conditions on the banks of the Wye. On more than one occasion I had to defrost my frozen body in the car before I could even contemplate driving. Later in the month I resumed gentle operating. Later on, early the next year, I got up to Patterdale to "the Northern dinner" and I subsequently became one of the first lodgers to use the George Starkey Hut. At this time though I was only able to walk the shores of the lake and slowly - how very slowly, I got to Hayes water, plus a very geriatric poodle, on the Meet Sunday in thick snow. That winter I was a guest at the Climbers Club dinner representing the A.B.M.S.A.C. Hamish Nicol suggested that I join the club. Surely I was the rickettyest aspirant the C.C. had ever had! In June I went to a C.C. meet and got to the top of Ingleborough and was elated. Still the new valve clicked happily on, In the following Spring I did High Street and Cross Fell once again accompanied by the geriatric poodle. After this the penny dropped. Cross Fell is climbed over Great Dun Fell. There is a road almost to the top of G.D.F. This then was the answer for future expeditions. Find a respectable mountain with either a chair lift or a road up part way and then gently ascend on foot.

The next Spring found me in Teneriffe: as you will know a cable car goes to within a thousand feet or so of the top of Teide -12,000 ft; a large volcano in the island's centre. I made the expedition with ease, and found about a dozen people dyspnoeic and cyanotic lying about the path on the way up. The crater stank of sulphur and sulphur dioxide, but I was elated and reached the cross on the top easily. There were no ill effects. The view was superb. In the Summer I spent a few days in Neustift and reached several passes and glaciers as well as the Dresdenerhutte with the aid of car and chair lift encouraged by a large bar of chocolate. How delightful to chop steps on a glacier again, how tempting the Schaufelspeitze was: but I resisted the temptation and remembered those happy days with George and Mary Starkey, Robert Greig, Tim Healey and Hamish and Millicent McArthur in 1952. My appetite was whetted. A year later I was offered a post in Baghdad at Ibn Sins Hospital, for six weeks during the summer. No hills there, but a superb view of Ararat on the way out and of the Dent Blanche on my return by plane. However there were plenty of minarets to climb, some with a narrow rickety path, spiralling up the outside as well as the occasional ziggurat to explore. The tower of Babel at Babylon had only its foundations to show, but the sight of the Tigris and Euphrates with their water buffalo did something by their association with past grandures to allay my desire for the heights.

Having reached this stage by almost disobeying all medical advice -I was not supposed to take alcohol either -I then accepted a post in Iran, living in Teheran at an altitude of 6,500 ft. I could see the Elbrus every day, and Damavand (18,500 ft) on clear

days. It was odd to see grass covered hills higher than the Eiger and only five miles away. The Shah was having built a cable car track to the top of Toubkal, but regretfully it was not completed in my time there. I did have some delightful days walking and trouting in the Elbruz streams, and in fact did quite well with the dry fly. Once again on walks I found I was much more acclimatised to the height than nursing and medical colleagues who joined me. One expedition with a car remains in my mind, when, late in the afternoon with the usual rapidly approaching dusk we found ourselves circumnavigating a 9,000 footer on a somewhat rough road during an attempt to return to Teheran. I was supposed to be navigating (being an "experienced" mountain traveller) and was well aware of the changing position of the sun long before the return to our starting point gave the game away to my wrathful companions. The presence of this road appeared completely without purpose, and I know of no other mountain with such a branchless circular road. It presumably could only happen in Iran. To crown it all, the only road home went for about 400 metres up the bed of a rapidly flowing but shallow river.

I was astonished at the height and fierceness of the hills both southeast and southwest of Teheran. Long sharp rock ridges abound and most of them are 13,000-15,000 ft high. But these are surrounded by salt deserts, and difficult of access. In any case there is no water.

Ten months in Iran was enough and after a holiday in Greece and a short return home, laden with carpets, I secured a job in Norway. This was at Mosjoen, forty miles from the Polar Circle. I did little walking during my four months there, but there were masses of Scottish-like peaks with gendarmes and spiky summits, and narrow ridges in all directions. An island nearby — Sandnessioen — has a spiky range well worth the journey, with its seven spiky and recently glaciated sisters and the peaks on the further-out islands look like super Coolins. Traena island is a gem in this category and the peaks arise straight out of the sea. I travelled back in October and crossed the Jotenheim. The road had just been ploughed; covered with snow as they were, one saw these hills at their best. So far someone else had always paid the fare for my wanderings and someone continued to do so. The next long posting was in Manitoba where I climbed the highest point "Old Baldy Mountain" (2,700 ft) by car. But the States were near and as soon as I could get away I had a weekend in the Black Hills of South Dakota. Getting there was my "longest ever in a day" drive; viz 657 miles in 13 hours. The Black Hills disappointed; Doris Day was not about. Thus no Calamity Jane, but I did breakfast in Sundance, saw real cowboys, and bought a Stetson there. The Devil's Tower, the core of an extinct volcano and a difficult 1,300 ft climb is well worth a visit, but apart from these outcrops these "highest hills east of the Rockies (7,000 ft)" are like Lake District Fells. The nearby "Bad Lands" are more exciting. Fierce sharp ranges in miniature produced entirely by erosion — perhaps 200 ft high at most are impressive and spread for miles.

I made the inevitable trip to the Jasper-Banff highway in 1978 but felt that whatever were their other attributes — scenically the Rockies are not in the same class as the Alps. On the way back I got to Yellowstone and its geysers, and saw the Teton range. I was impressed by the high hills in Wyoming which go up to 13,000 feet. This is glorious country and I made a further expedition here when this year's holiday 1979 came up. Montana and Wyoming are the place for gentle high hill ramblers — miles of undulating hills range after range, but no snow in summer. I had a look at the east of the Tetons this year and was again impressed with their difficulties. (I had seen the west side and was impressed in August 1978.) They resemble the peaks of Dauphiné and go to about the same height.

A side trip to Yosemite was possible and I enjoyed it but the "Wall of the morning light" has never been for me. The giant Sequoias are unique and superb. Mt. Rainier looked good from the plane but the fish dinners at Fisherman's Wharf remains the gem of that side trip. I even visited Alcatraz and helicoptered over the isle later during this "working" visit to a San Francisco surgeons' conference. I also went onto the island by boat and was given, as part of the guided tour, a view of Al Capone's cell.

From the Tetons I made tracks for Salt Lake City and Bryce Canyon National Park. Both this and Zion National Park in Utah are well worth a visit for the scenery, though the rock climbing in Zion looked superb. Then on to Las Vegas, I gave this ten minutes of my valuable time, the time it took to drive through this man made blot on the Nevada desert. Then on to "The Canyon," seen especially well from a helicopter, 35 minutes for £20 and well worth it; though it was horrid to look through one's knees to the Colorado 4.500 feet below. On then to Colorado Springs and Pikes Peak. This is the only "fier tausander" to which it is possible to drive a car to the top, and the pièce de resistance of the trip. I obliged and had my photograph taken on the summit at 14,110 feet. The dead and dving and intensely dysphoeic and cyanotic were all around me and the car even guiped a bit — but went up all the same. My own pulse rate was 70/min. It is remarkable that my pre 1972 acclimatisation could last for so long. The hill is a bit of a cheat. A rack railway comes up the other side with equally blue and mountain sick passengers. Thereafter it was flat all the way, to the Niagara Falls and Ottawa, I discovered that the buildings in Kansas City are over seven storeys high (ref Oklahoma Act I). That the corn is as high as an elephant's eye (ref Oklahoma Act I). That the Deadwood stage (Calamity Jane - 1st song) no longer runs, but there are real cowboys in Sundance and Idaho and, as for me. I have certainly left my heart in San Francisco and feel thoroughly rehabilitated — especially as I have proved all those physicians so wrong.

A FEW SWISS CLASSICS

Les Swindin

ŧ

I think it was in the 1970 Journal of this club that I first came across the name of Walter Kirstein. It was then that he reported his ascent of the Biancograt at the age of 73. The Alpine Journal of the same year contained another of his articles, "60 Years of Off-Piste Skiing", and about the same time I made a very brief encounter with the man himself when we both attended an A.B.M. meet in Langdale. Over the next few years I read more of his articles in the Alpine Journal, in fact, it got to the stage that when the familiar parcel popped through the letter box the first thing I did was to unwrap it and look for Walter's article.

Well I ask you, who could not fail to be impressed by this man's record? I don't mean by that he has climbed particularly difficult routes or skied extreme faces, but, to the ordinary mortal to whom mountaineering in all its forms is a way of life and who has every intention of keeping things that way, he is an inspiration. I am such a person and he does inspire me.

In Autumn 1977 I encountered Walter again, once more on an A.B.M. meet in the Lakes. On this occasion we got to talk at length to each other in the Starkey hut and over dinner at the Brotherswater Inn and I was only too delighted to agree when he suggested I climb with him the next day. The day was perfect for climbing and Walter had little trouble following me up Little Chamonix. Not bad for an 80 year old!

We repeated the performance the following year but on Raven Crag in Coombe Gill and accompanied by Jeremy Whitehead. This time conditions were not so good and Walter experienced some difficulty on the greasy first pitch of Raven Crag Buttress. As a consequence we abandoned the rest of the climb and traversed over to Corvus to finish that route by the hand traverse pitch. On this he excelled himself, it was like the previous year on Shepherd's Crag.

I was now in fairly regular communication with Walter and when I told him I would be in the Alps at about the same time as him this summer he suggested I might like to climb with him there. This really was an opportunity too good to miss. My plans for the season in the Alps were rather vague: with Barbara, my wife, I had plans to meet some Lincoln M.C. friends for a tour of the Oberland which we had attempted before but not completed because of slight mistiming with the weather, but this left us a week to spare. It is our usual practice anyway to get to the Alps before our friends as this gives Barbara a chance to get acclimatised and so 'hold her own' on the hill, usually as the only woman in the party, when they join us. It was convenient therefore for us to head for the Engadine and do our training there. As it turned out Walter was almost at the end of his holiday when we arrived in Pontresina. He had done all his training and had engaged a guide for a climb in the Bregaglia so we arranged to meet him again after his climb. Meanwhile we contented ourselves with a couple of climbs from the new Boyal hut. A note of interest maybe to British alpinists is that this is one of the few huts in Switzerland where you prepare your own food, in the winter room, but if you don't want to upset the guardian, please don't put the polished aluminium pans directly on the fire, he doesn't like it.

Suitably acclimatised now, we met Walter again and organised a day tour from Pontresina. Directly above the town on the eastern side there is a rocky peak of about 3000m called Las Sours which was recommended to us by the guides' office. It is conveniently served by a chairlift which takes one to within about an hour's walk of the ridge which leads via a couple of towers to the summit. An hour from the summit, on the other side, is the Segantini hut. We were joined on the outing by 69 year old Stuart Ferguson with whom Walter had done his training over the past weeks. I'm afraid the walk up to the ridge took rather longer than an hour, but then the going was rather like An Stac screes. Once on the ridge life became much more tolerable. In some ways it resembled parts of the Skye ridge, although the climbing is nowhere harder than Grade II. Nevertheless we had a thoroughly enjoyable day with splendid panoramic views of the familiar higher peaks across the valley and the delightful lower alps on the same side. Our two 'clients' expressed themselves well pleased with their scramble and the 'guides' were not irritated by the genteel pace of the proceedings.

After this rather pleasant introduction to our Alpine season, Barbara and I left the Bernina for more serious things elsewhere. In Meiringen the weather was sultry and storms threatened but this was what we always expect from this particular part of the Alps and so, despite a none too favourable report for the outlook period when we 'phoned 162, we put our Oberland plan into action.

We had been joined by Geoff Causey and John Oaks of the A.B.M. and two friends, Al and Dave, who were novices as far as alpinism was concerned. The plan was to spend a week in the mountains moving from hut to hut and including as many peaks as possible on the way. We intended nothing particularly serious, but were intent on major peaks. We chose to enter the range from Fiesch which is quite gentle if the lift to Kühboden is used since a more or less horizontal traverse leads to the Aletsch glacier and the going on that is easy, at least as far as the Konkordia hut. I found this approach quite interesting since I was able to compare it with our entry by this route on skis a couple of years previously. On that occasion we had spent six nights at Konkordia doing very little, the weather again. This time we left after one night for the Finsteraarhorn hut. Driving rain at the Grünhornlücke was enough to dissuade us from attempting a peak so, in fact, we had a fairly short day. Not a good start, we felt, but at least we were now in position to attempt a peak we had long sought.

The next three days proved pretty active: we first climbed the Finsteraarhorn by the ordinary route. This proved quite interesting above the Hugisattel as it was well covered with fresh snow and visibility, down to a few yards, kept one's mind fixed on the route finding. In fact it was rather like a good winter scramble in Wales. On the descent we took great satisfaction in 'rescuing' two damsels in distress, left to wait by their male companions at the col. Much better conditions, i.e. perfect, prevailed the following morning and we were able to traverse the Gross Fiescherhorn without difficulty, although we almost climbed Ochs by mistake, to arrive at the new Obermönchjoch hut. I need say little about the 1½ hour ascent of the Mönch we made from there but the high winds we experienced on the route were not a welcome sign. About a foot of overnight snow put a damper on our intentions of the Jungfrau, instead we headed back to civilisation in the Rhone valley.

Feeling well pleased with three 4,000'ers in three days we made the short journey to Täsch and higher things. We had often considered doing the Täschhorn-Dom traverse, but each time we'd visited the Pennine Alps, conditions seemed unsuitable or we were in the wrong valley and somehow had never got round to giving it a try. We were still uncertain after the snowfall we had recently encountered, but for want of something better we decided to take a look at the Kin face. What a delight it was to visit the Dom hut again and renew acquaintances with the guardian and his brother. The Kin face was in perfect condition, he assured us, and the weather was set fair. Our objective for the morrow was decided.

Once on the Festi glacier we roped up in threes, Geoff, Al and Dave forming one rope, with Barbara between J.O. and me the other. Below the Festi-Kinlücke we surveyed the first difficulties. The way to the lowest point in the ridge, the normal route, was barred by an insurmountable bergschrund, but an alternative route further left looked promising and in the event proved a simple alternative, although Al found life more comfortable on the icy upper slopes with his ice-hammer to hand. Conveniently we reached the ridge at the point of descent to the Kin glacier and so took a few minutes relaxation before starting down. At this point we were able to pick out the rest of our route to the summit and what a fine climb was in prospect. From the vicinity of the Dom hut it is only possible to see the final few feet of the Täschhorn, but from here we had the whole of the superb face close at hand.

It took very few minutes to descend the loose rubble that forms the south side of this

col and refit crampons. A steady pace then took us towards our goal. At first the Dom was mostly obscured from our line of vision, but as we reached an altitude about level with the Domjoch, the Domgrat suddenly presented itself to our gaze. To my great surprise it was free of snow and a few moments later I was discussing with my colleagues the thoughts going through my mind. Here we were within an hour of the Täschhorn summit, all going well, and it wasn't yet 8.00 a.m. Should we include the Dom in our climb? Nobody would immediately commit themselves, we would see how we felt when we gained our first objective. The quandary was that for a start I had never contemplated doing the Täschhorn-Dom with Barbara, thinking it much too serious an undertaking, in addition Al and Dave, in their first season, didn't have the experience that was really needed.

We breakfasted on the summit in the warm morning sun and assessed the situation. There was no question that Geoff, J.O. and I could cope, but then we could hardly expect the others to descend the Kin face alone. After a good deal of discussion the outcome of which to me at least was never in doubt, it was agreed we would all do it. We would remain roped up as before so that Barbara was safely anchored in the middle, whilst Geoff would lead the second rope from the rear during the initial descent. This, which we found the most interesting part of the traverse, took us considerably longer than the guidebook suggested it might, I suppose because we were parties of three and the rock was quite icy in places. This was of no consequence, however, as the sun continued to grace us with its presence. We passed the Domjoch and took a rest a few feet above it. A party of four Swiss climbers who had come from the Mischabel bivouac were just leaving and they were to cause us some problems a little later.

From here we thought it better to climb in pairs and so leaving John to await the arrival of Geoff's team, Barbara and I set off for what we hoped might be a delightful climb up the Domgrat. As far as position and commitment were concerned, it was everything one might desire, but the quality of the rock is abysmal, quite different from that we had just left on the Täschhorn. This we could contend with if we were distantly removed from other parties, but unfortunately we soon caught up the Swiss party who were more than a little clumsy. There was only one thing to do and that was to overtake, so I took to trying alternative ways round obstacles only to be thwarted each time. However, persistence paid off and after four or five tries we did get past and were able to enjoy to the full the climbing of the final tower on by far the best rock on the ascent. We later christened the ridge the 'Domgrot' on account of the nature of the terrain.

Our outing met with great approval from the guardian when we arrived at the hut and he was most forthcoming with tea-water even though he quickly cottoned on to our ploy of sending a different member of the party to the kitchen each time we required a refill. He still gave us more.

Invariably when climbing in the Alps I feel the need to do a climb that is perhaps more challenging than the majority of climbs I undertake. This kind of route requires equal ability from all the participants and as we were in the Zermatt valley my thoughts turned to the N.E. face of Lyskamm. I had been on the eastern summit the previous year and pondered then about an ascent of this face, and I had also seen the same face at Easter when skiing the High Level route. The route of the face, according to the A.C. guide, is the Norman-Neruda which follows the line of a rock spur direct to the east summit.

Whilst Barbara went off with the rest of the party to climb the Rotgrat on the Alphubel, John and I headed, via the Gornergrat railway, for the Monte Rosa hut. About 5.30 a.m. the following morning we dug out our ice gear from our sacks a few feet below the bergschrund. It was pretty cold with a stiff breeze blowing some powder snow about, so it was nice to get on the move again. We crossed the bergschrund by tunnelling through the overhanging lip some way below and to the left of the rib and moved together taking a diagonal line up towards the rib and the sunlight by now starting to creep towards us. With the present snow cover we had climbed half way up the face before we came within the vicinity of the rock and, to relieve the monotony of climbing the constant angled snow slope, we headed for it. It looked inviting at first, but once on the rib we discovered that it was somewhat steeper than the slopes we had been climbing and in addition it was iced up and exposed to the not inconsiderable wind that had developed. We abandoned the rock and continued again on snow on a line parallel to it straight for the summit. The only difficulty encountered was a steepish rope's length just before the slope eased off and this was the only place on the face, apart from our short deviation on to the rock, that we did not move together. Nor had we found a need to use the screws and ice-hammers we carried. We both found this mode of ascent most satisfying and were delighted with our performance when we stood on the summit and, having climbed a 700 metre face, realised the time was only 8.10 a.m.

A jubilant party enjoyed a grand celebration dinner that same evening in the Bahnhof hotel at Randa as the Alphubel party had also had a very satisfactory climb to end their Alpine season. It rained the next day.



1, New Coventry Street, London W1V 3HG, Tel. 01-734 1921

"ON CURVES OF FREEDOM"* An Account of a Sabbatical Year

Jeremy Whitehead

Ð

6

In August 1978 it was the Alps as usual, with Fred Jenkins. We went to Grindelwald, the first time I had been there, bar one flying visit, since the 1965 Alpine Meet. It all seemed much changed.

Our training climb was the Wetterhorn, which was quite well snowed-up after the big storms of ten days before. Lunching on the Wettersattel after the summit the knife slipped and I sliced off much of one fingertip. Blood was all over the snow, and the rock rib on the way down. The doctor stitched up the finger and forbad all climbing, but clearly snow walks were on, so we planned a 'walking tour'. This took us via the Schmadri and Mutthorn huts to the Lauterbrunnen Breithorn; over the Gamchilucke and Zahme Frau to the Blumlisalp hut; up the Blumlisalphorn (Fred laughed off my suggestion that the ridge traverse or N. face were suitable for a one-handed climber) and down to the Gspaltenhorn hut; over the Sefinenfurka and back to Stechelberg. Two days of storm followed so we moved east to Morteratsch, where time and weather allowed us the Palu-Bellavista traverse with descent by the Loch.

In the autumn I enjoyed several weekends in the Lakes before flying out to Nepal at the beginning of November. Trekking there is now so well established that it is probably as cheap to go with the commercial agencies as to do-it-yourself. There can be few more relaxing holidays (at least for the mountaineer).

My first trek was with Sherpa Expeditions, to Jomosom near the headwaters of the Kali Gandaki river. This is one of the great rivers that cuts right through the Himalayas, in between the Dhaulagiri and Annapurna massifs. We started from Pokhara, reached by a bus journey, and spent the first four days crossing the ridges and valleys that run south from the Annapurna range. Unfortunately the weather was unusually poor, with low cloud obscuring all views of the peaks. It was not till we neared Tukuche, two days on up the river, that the skies cleared and we saw the Nilgiris, Annapurna and Dhaulagiri towering some 18,000 ft above us. From here one fails utterly to appreciate the scale of these mountains. Tukuche used to be a busy trading post, but with the closing of the frontier with Tibet it is now nearly deserted. It was here that the 1950 French expedition to Annapurna based itself while exploring the area. A day further is Jomosom, once the end of the road for trekkers but now you are allowed up to the shrine of Muktinath, where the sacred flame burns on water. Our time schedule did not allow us to go there — a pity as it would have made a far better objective than Jomosom, which is windy and dusty and not very attractive.

The return was by a slightly different route, and we did get some better views, especially of Annapurna South and Macha Puchare.

Back at Kathmandu I had a free week exploring the city and its surrounding valley. It is fascinating just to stroll round the bazaars and alleyways of the old part of the city, where life is carried on as it always has been, and the occasional car inching its way through is very much an intruder. Carry a camera and you are a tourist, and fair game for beggars and street vendors of all sorts. Leave it behind, and dress scruffily and you are ignored and can feel part of the place.

The start of the Mountain Travel trek to Langtang coincided with a day of rain in Kathmandu and snowfall in the mountains. Thereafter we had perfect weather for three weeks. It was supposed to be a climbing trek, but on reaching the valley base at Kyangjin Gompa it was clear that the route over the Ganja La (16,500 ft) in waist deep snow would be impossible for our thinly clad and barefoot ordinary porters. We had permission for an unclimbed(?) 19,500 footer on that side, but all we could do was our planned training climb, the 18,000 ft Yala peak. This was from a camp at 15,600 ft which was on snow. At this height in December nights are cold (-20° C by 8 p.m.), but the

days are warm enough to sunbathe. Yala peak was easy enough, about F +, but laborious because of knee deep powder snow. The summit gave us fine views of Langtang Lirung, often tried but first climbed only a few weeks before, and Dorje Lakpa (unclimbed) among others. Over the frontier ridge we saw the upper part of Gosainthan in Tibet, climbed by the Chinese but off limits to Westerners. Many other peaks were visible, but lacking any reliable maps we couldn't put a name to most. The trekking maps are completely unreliable off the actual trails. I suggested tackling a slightly higher summit the next day, but was told that it was much too dangerous as we had no ladders for the crevasses. Americans lack Alpine experience and the Sherpas are used to well 'equipped' routes. Any party of Alpine mountaineers would have tackled it.

Our return was via the sacred lakes of Gosainkund, and then south along a high ridge descending from 12,000 ft to 8,000 ft. The three days spent walking along this were sheer joy. We were by now very fit, there was no tension or sense of urgency, and there were splendid views at every turn. On one side we had the Annapurna, Manaslu and Ganesh ranges; on the other the Jugal. Gaurishankar and Khumbu groups, with Everest just peeping over beyond Gaurishankar. In many ways this high level walk was the finest part of the trip.

In January a week's skiing in Courchevel was followed by a "Chamonix to Lake Geneva" ski tour, again with Fred. Thaw conditions and rain prevailed, so we had to start at Flaine for safety, and we had only one clear, cold day before we finished at Chatel, still two stages from the Lake.

There followed two good weekends, in the Cairngorms and Glencoe, with Crispin Agnew, and then I set off at the end of March for seven weeks' ski touring.

The first fortnight was leading a S.C.G.B. tour in the Ortler, a district which I had visited only once before, in bad weather and with a guided party. This time the weather was reasonably kind, and we were able to achieve much of our programme, including the ascents of Cevedale, Monte Pasquale and Punta San Matteo. This latter, up the crevassed Forno glacier, gave one of the best powder descents I can remember. After this, I moved to Chamonix to join Les and Barbara Swindin, and Paul Luton, for the High Level Route. We were lucky with the weather, with only two bad days, and were able to do almost exactly as planned. We took the Verbier variant, and climbed the Rosa Blanche, Pigne d'Arolla, Castor and Alphubel on route. This was the fortnight spanning Easter, so the huts were pretty full and there were tracks everywhere, a piste in fact. How different from April 1967 when, doing it the other way, we found it almost deserted. Saas Fee is now dreadful, with ski tows everywhere on the glaciers. Parties were even leaving for the Allalinhorn at 11 a.m., and as for the reckless skiing on crevassed glaciers...! It is a wonder there are not far more accidents.

At Chamonix once more I managed a rest day before the S.C.G.B. party arrived for another H.L.R. We had hoped to achieve the classic route and then return for Mont Blanc, but the weather forced our hand. After a fine day on Mont Velan doubtful weather made us give up the Valsorey stage and go round to Verbier and the Mont Fort. The next day, over Rosa Blanche to the Dix was perfect, of course, and would have been ideal for the Plateau du Couloir. As it was we got in the lower summit of Mont Blanc de Cheilon in worsening weather, and gave up the Pigne to reach the Vignettes via the Pas de Chevres. Next day was still poor so we went round to Zermatt by the valleys, but were able to get in the Signalkuppe after a rebuff on Castor due to cold winds and poor snow conditions. An attempt on Nordend was muffed because of poor route selection. (Moral: follow the English guidebook and not the tracks.) The weather was now set fine, so we shot back to Chamonix, and were lucky enough to have perfect conditions on Mont Blanc. Clear skies and not a breath of wind, and the route particularly easy this year. A great climax to the tour.

I was back in time for the Dundonnel meet, and then set off at the end of June for Peru. This was in response to an advertisement by Alan Rouse, which gave him two clients. The Cordillera Blanca is a splendid range of beautiful ice peaks, and most routes now go to small parties using alpine tactics, though big, fixed-rope expeditions are still in evidence. Alan guided us up Nevado Pisco (5752 m) for acclimatisation, a kind of higher Pigne d'Arolla, and the most popular peak in the range, climbed by all and sundry. We then tried the (possibly) second ascent of Shaqsha (5703 m) but found ourselves short of hardware on a route rather more difficult than expected, and gave it up after a grand day's climbing.

The highest peak in the range, and in Peru, is Nevado Huascaran (6768 m or 22,206 ft). This we had to try. We found it well tracked, a group of 32 Japanese having just done it with many fixed ropes. From a base at around 4600 m we had two more camps, at 5400 m and 5900 m. The route up to the high camp is guite dangerous, as one traverses a shelf threatened by seracs above, rather like the Corridor on the Grand Combin. The climb to the summit dome takes a steep crevassed slope with a tricky bergschrund where there was fortunately a fixed rope. In some years this section is impassable. The main problem was the altitude, and for me a nagging toothache, but I found that by synchronising breathing with a very slow pace one could continue without the frequent halts otherwise necessary. Alas, clouds had come up from the Amazon basin to obscure any view from the top. The descent to the top camp went easily, and we judged it prudent not to risk the shelf in the afternoon sunlight, despite other parties using it. The wisdom of this was shown the next morning, when we had to clamber over the debris of a vast serac fall that had obliterated the tracks since we had come up. The descent to the valley is 10,000 feet yet seemed easier than many in the Alps. The route as a whole is about P.D. + or possibly A.D. -, and we found the snow in generally good condition. The lower glacier is almost dry and little crevassed; in fact we only used the rope at the bergschrund pitch, and felt it otherwise preferable to go at our own several paces.

That was the end of the climbing, but I took an extra week to act as tourist and visit the Inca remains at Cuzco and Machu Picchu before coming back to pick up the threads and start working again. Now I'll have to wait till I retire before I can do the same again, though one never knows.

*There is much comfort in high hills, and a great easing of the heart. We look upon them and our nature fills with loftier images from their life apart. They set our feet on curves of freedom, bent to snap the circles of our discontent.

Geoffrey Winthrop Young, from "Freedom".



1

à.

¢

TWO STYLES OF A.B.M.S.A.C. TIE

Association ties (red and silver badge on blue background), may be purchased from the address below. Last year's style with blade 2[‡] wide is still available and another new style with 3[‡] blade will be available from 1 March.

J. S. Whyte, 40 Cassiobury Drive, Watford, Herts WD1 3A8

Cheques for £2.50 (post free) to be drawn payable to J. S. Whyte,

ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES The Annual General Meeting

The President, Mr. P. S. Boulter, was in the Chair and 15 Members were present.

The following Officers and Committee Members were elected for the year 1980:-

Vice President: Hon, Librarian: Hon. Meets Secretary: Committee Members:

Mr. F. P. French Mr. K. J. Baldry Mr. A. I. Andrews Mrs. E. R. Freeman Dr. D. J. Lintott Mr. M. Pinnev Mr. C. Armstrong

The remaining Officers and Committee Members, being eligible, were re-elected for the vear 1980.

The Hon. Treasurer presented the accounts for the period ended 30th June, 1979. He pointed out that the Journal was the most substantial item of expenditure. Mr. Ledeboer reported that a quotation had been obtained from another printer for the 1980 Journal, and that a sub-Committee had been appointed by the Committee to consider the matter further on the return of the Hon. Editor from Australia. The meeting offered a number of suggestions for reducing the cost.

It was agreed that the accounts for the period ended 30th June, 1979 be adopted and the thanks of the Meeting were expressed to the Treasurer and to his predecessor, Mr. Wendell-Jones, who had assisted during the early part of the year.

The Hon. Treasurer reported that the flat rate S.A.C. Subscription had been fixed by the Committee at £17.00.

It was agreed by a majority that the Association's Subscription be increased to £5.00.

In response to a question the President outlined the discussions which had been held during the year with Officers of the S.A.C. regarding the Association's relationship with the S.A.C.*

The Meeting expressed its thanks to Mr. Bose for organising the Alpine Meet and the President mentioned the arrangements which had been made for the Alpine Meet in 1980. He said that he hoped that some camping might be possible in a private Camp Site nearby.

Finally the President expressed the hope that more use would be made of Llanrwst Cottage in the coming year in response to Mr. Byam-Grounds' generosity,

*See Editorial.

ASSOCIATION ACCOUNTS 1978-1979

INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT

for the period ended 30th June, 1979 .

. .

Income from Members		<u>1978</u>
Subscriptions (Note 1)	790	1,082
Entrance Fees	8	32
Life Membership Credit	50	45
Profit on Sale of Ties	~	12
Insurance Commissions	12	_(3)
	860	1,168

Less: Expenditure			
Hire of Rooms	150		200
Journal (Note 2)	658		740
Printing, Postage etc. SNTO	155		218
Printing, Postage etc. Association	59		170
Insurance	14		14
Entertainment	61		106
BMC Subscription	70		55
Lecture Expenses	35		_
Sundries	16		27
Welsh Hut Rent less receipts	25		8
Depreciation fixtures Welsh hut	53		
- · · · ·		1,296	

4

4

4

1

Add: Investment Income: -162 103 Association Investments 110 54 **Building Society Interest** 272 157 76 Less: Taxation (Note 3) 73 84 (352) 565 Add: Surplus (deficit) on exchange

22

1,538

(370)

196

(174)

(316)

(490)

(436)

213

BALANCE SHEET

30th June, 1979				1978
Fixed Assets (Note 4) Projector (N. S. Finzi Bequest) Equipment at Swiss Tourist Office Welsh Hut Investment at cost (Note 5)		1 160 1,872		1 1 214 1,872
Current Assets Stock of Ties at cost Debtors Cash on deposit in building society Cash at Bank	13 162 1,665 1,840		13 184 1,542 9 1,748 1,748	
Deduct: Current Liabilities Current Account – ABMSAC Ltd. Creditors Subscriptions in Advance	470 101 500 1,071		904 46 296 1,246	
Net Current Assets		796 £2,803		502 £2,590
Sources of Finance Life Membership Account Accumulated Revenue Account Balance at 30th September, 1978 Add: Excess of income over expenditure N. S. Finzi Bequest	1,638	852	2,128	852
		1,851 100 £2,803	(490)	1,638 £2,590

P. S. Boulter - President

R. A. Coatsworth - Hon. Treasurer

REPORT OF THE AUDITOR

I have examined the books and vouchers of the Association and report that the attached accounts, together with the notes, are in accordance therewith.

30th September, 1979

G. A. Daniels Hon. Auditor 441

¥.

đ.

	NOTES TO THE ACCOUNTS	30th JUNE, 1979	1070
1.	Subscriptions Subscription income is derived as follows:- Members Year to 31.12.79 220 @ £4 Year to 31.12.78 (271 @ £4)	880	<u>1978</u> 1,084
	Affiliated Members Year to 31.12.79 22 ⑦ £5 Year to 31.12.78 (20 ⑦ £5) Subscriptions in respect of earlier years	110 <u>4</u>	100
	Adjustment re subscriptions in advance	994 (204) 790	1,195 (113) 1,082
2.	Journal	<u>1979</u>	<u>1978</u>
	Cost of the journal is made up as follows:— Printing Despatch cost and other expenses Less: Advertising Revenue	663 100 763 105 £658	684 120 804 64 £740
3.	Taxation The Association is liable to Corporation Tax on		utside sources. Depreciation
4.	Fixed Assets New Projector (N. S. Finzi Bequest) Equipment at Swiss National Tourist Office Expenditure to date on Welsh Hut	Cost 166 80 214	to date 165 79 54
5.	Investments These are as follows:-		••

£1,000 4½% Agricultural Mortgage Corporation Deb. Stock 1977/82. 1,080 Brunner Investment Trust Limited Ordinary Shares of 25p. 1,043 United States Deb. Corporation Ordinary Shares of 25p. Cost of these holdings was £1,872. Aggregate market value at 30th June 1979 was £2,840 (1978 £2,883).

THE ANNUAL DINNER, 14th November, 1979

This year the Annual Dinner was held on a separate date from the A.G.M. in order to provide adequate time for formal business without intruding on the courtesies extended to guests. It was again held at the Washington Hotel, following general approval of the rather more informal arrangements at this venue the previous year. Some 55 members and guests attended — a somewhat reduced figure, in view of the absence of certain notable regulars abroad and the general economic climate.

The Hon. Secretary, Stuart Beare, proposed the toast of the Swiss Confederation in historical perspective. Its remarkable survival right from the famous Declaration at Altdorf in 1291 had eclipsed other confederations and today it was the most enviable keystone in the democracies of Europe.

Monsieur Rial, Counsellor at the Swiss Embassy, responded on behalf of the Ambassador, Dr Thalmann, who was now unfortunately retiring. His "historical" allusion was the changing mountaineering scene — witness the earlier expedition by Dr Amanuel Clements for the conquest of the Riffelberg, comprising 198 persons with mules, including 4 surgeons and 3 chaplains, 2,000 cigars, dynamite and 154 umbrellas (Mark Twain).

The President prefaced his review by announcing 2 new Hon. Members — Dr Thalmann, retiring Swiss Ambassador, and Walter Kirstein, who were warmly applauded — and welcoming Mr Breitenmoser as successor to Mr Imoberdorf at the S.N.T.O. The Association had now reached its 70th year of life and there had been a happy atmosphere in all main activities this year including the Alpine Meet. Despite the effect of financial problems on membership, there was a good relationship with the Central Committee, who were considering our problems with understanding.

The President of the Alpine Club, Peter Lloyd, replied on behalf of the guests and instanced the importance of two personalities as links with Switzerland — Andre Roch, who had played a major part in the recent Avalanche Symposium, and Alfred Zurcher, whose legendary hospitality at Zermatt would be remembered after his death.

A congenial evening was spent by all.

J.P.L.

THE OUTDOOR MEETS 1979

NORTHERN DINNER MEET, FEBRUARY

Brooke Midgley

Showing little imagination or adventurousness we held the meet in Patterdale and the dinner at the Glenridding Hotel yet again. It seems to be fairly popular as we had 89 members and guests there.

This year we again had lots of snow and ice which did its lovely transformation trick to the hills. From the valleys they looked great, but on the tops the wind strength was vicious to invigorating. Many routes were done of all grades and some had a longer day out than planned.

Dinner was taken as 1½ sittings, but the high quality did not seem to suffer from the group departure to attend a rescue. Some members helped in the rescue whilst others made the effort but happily were not required. It all ended reasonably well with no irreparable damage done to rescued or dinner.

The Guest Speaker was C. Douglas Milner who showed some magnificent slides accompanied by an informative and amusing commentary.

Sunday's snow conditions were too good to miss and a small group of members' wives and children played ice hockey on Lanty's Tarn whilst other members took part in more serious and steeper ice routes.

WINTER CLIMBING MEET, BRACKENCLOSE, MARCH

Peter Fleming

This Meet was a joint A.C./A.B.M.S.A.C. Meet and eighteen people attended, drawn fairly equally from both clubs, although many were members of both.

The weekend, 3rd/4th March, unfortunately coincided with the end of Lakeland's biggest freeze-up for many years; it had been a winter to remember, with hard ice routes in good conditions for two whole months — some notable ones were Great Gully on the Screes, Inaccessible Gully on Dove Crag, Ravencrag Gully, Coombe Ghyll. The High Gullies of Scafell came into condition later in March, when low temperatures returned to freeze up the consolidated snow. This was a dangerous period for unwary fell walkers, borne out by the number of accidents which occurred.

On Saturday, in mild conditions, the Meet went up Styhead to Kern Knotts, then along the Gable Traverse to the Dress Circle where we had lunch under the magnificent monolith of Napes Needle. We then continued along to the Sphinx Rock and up the Gully to the right to the top of Napes Ridges followed by a scramble through the broken crags above to Westmorland's Cairn and its impressive view. The route has for many years been my favourite scrambling route up Great Gable. It is full of interest and grand rock scenery. New to many members, it seemed to be much appreciated.

From the summit of Gable, we descended to Beck Head then traversed the two summits of Kirkfell. Our way off led down the very steep ridge running down into Wasdale Head, and so back to Brackenclose.

Early risers on Sunday morning discovered the water supply had failed, and after grovelling about in the beck and investigating various man holes, an air lock was eventually found and cleared. The temperature was lower than the previous day, promising better snow conditions, so we headed up Brown Tongue towards Scafell, armed with crampons and axes, etc. Half way up the Tongue I found another axe, this one made of stone. Having been there over 4,000 years, the thaw of the previous day had released it from beneath the turf to lie in full view of the path. I have since shown it to various local experts who declared it to be one of the finest undamaged specimens to come to light. It is of the 'Langdale' type 4,000 to 5,000 years old, and was probably lost, not a reject.

By the time we reached the 'Woolworth Boulder' at the bottom of Hollow Stones the snow was lying deep. Crampons were strapped on beneath the direct pitch of Deep Ghyll, which we made short work of, 25 feet of snow lay here, almost covering the chockstones. On reaching the second chockstone, we found a large ice cave beneath it, in which two climbers had bivvied for the night. We had our lunch in here and with a torch discovered a second 'room' inside on a higher level. Continuing up Deep Ghyll we reached Scafell's summit in thick mist and a cold wind. Our descent route lay down by Foxes Tarn and up on the Mickledore Ridge via the base of East Buttress draped in a winter mantle. Scafell Pike was soon reached then on down to Lingmell Col and a traverse under the summit to join the long ridge which comes down almost to the back door of Brackenclose. The view of Wasdale on the way down was a memorable end to a very pleasant weekend, and a meet that hopefully could become an annual one.

CWM EIGIAU, MAY

R. A. Coatsworth

In contrast to our last visit to this hut, the Hon. Meets Secretary had done his homework and fixed the meteorological office to ensure clear skies, warm days, and no wind. He had also researched the stars to enable the hour long walk up to the hut from the road to be made by the light of a full moon on a beautiful evening. This meet was fully booked and consequently the tiny hut was cramped full as all members present had carried ropes intending to use them on Craig Yr Ysfa, which is only a few minutes walk away. Saturday morning saw large quantities of ironmongery spread out whilst deciding on what and where to climb. The result was that the entire hut climbed Amphitheatre Butress in times varying from little over an hour to nearly all day. Parties spread out at the top and either continued onto other classic routes or traversed the tops of the Carneddau. All parties had a full day in the fresh air and ate a good meal followed by a surprising amount of alcohol which shows the length to which some people go to ensure they get a drink on Saturday night.

Sunday saw the more leisurely parties from the Saturday determined to walk the more distant Carnedd ridges whilst others revisited Craig Yr Ysfa or explored the valleys in this quiet corner of Snowdonia. A general exodus on Sunday evening left feelings that it had been one of those perfect weekends in the hills when one had no company other than that of one's companions and when nature had been generous in her hospitality.

DUNDONNELL MEET - MAY-JUNE

Alisdair Andrews

A party of 18 members and guests attended the Association's first meet to Dundonnell, based on the J.M.C.S. Edinburgh Section's Cottage (The Smiddy) and the Dundonnell Hotel. The cottage, as its name suggests, is a restored and converted smiddy, still equipped with all a blacksmith's implements including a full size bellows.

Members were on the hill each day and ascents were made of the following hills: — An Teallach (all tops), The Fannichs (most tops), Seona Bhraigh, Beinn Dearg, Meall nan Ceapraichean, Beinn Dearg Mhor, A'Mhaighdean, and other lesser hills.

Several members walked into Shenavall and spent two or three days climbing the hills between Fion Loch and An Teallach. There are no soft options in this area as Ernst Sondheimer discovered when he walked from Kinlochewe to Dundonnell, only to discover the door of the bothy at Carn More, where he planned to stop the night, geschlossen! Our members need to be resourceful as Graham Daniels and John Percival discovered after driving through an open gate en route to the southern Fannichs, only to find the gate locked on their return.

The Meet Leader joined a youngish party, average age 70 +, on one excursion and was assisted on the hills by liberal draughts of the Honorary Editor's home made poteen, which has the same qualities as Mummery's blood. At the end of the day the soles came off both my boots!

A most successful meet.

OGWEN, JUNE

J. W. Eccles

Nine members attended this weekend meet at the Climbers' Club Hut, Helyg, and we shared the kitchen with a group of campers who were taking part in the annual cycle race round the Snowdon horseshoe!

Light rain fell on the Saturday (not bad for Wales!) and while the meet leader retired after some indecision to Tremadoc, others ventured out onto the hills. Sunday was more typically Welsh with steady rain and occasional hail storms. Nevertheless all braved the elements and two ropes attempted, much to the amusement of other members on Heather Terrace, an easy route on the East face of Tryfan. One rope succeeded, but hail on spectacles defeated the other.

An enjoyable weekend with much valuable testing of waterproofs accomplished.

JULY MEET, INGLETON

Brooke Midgley

1

€.

4

This meet was extremely popular — with the Midgley family and possibly Ben Howe! Ben came for the day to meet the members of the Alpine Meet and have a training day on the hills. He was unlucky with his first objective and lazy Midgleys could not help with his second aim.

The weather was indifferent and we managed to get wet on some minor walks. The children enjoyed camping and it made a change going to the Dales.

The area is very pleasant and well worth a visit, possibly the meets have been arranged too near to the summer holidays to have popular support — or maybe I wear the wrong after-shave.

THE ALPINE MEET, AUGUST

S. M. Freeman

1. The hotel-based section.

Debu Bose overcame what seemed at times to be insuperable difficulties to find us accommodation in Courmayeur, where beds were very much at a premium. In the end we were housed comfortably and economically in two nearby hotels, and were able to meet together for dinner at an excellent place found by either Peter Ledeboer or someone else. A happy social occasion was enjoyed by all those present, who were M. and P. Boulter, Coales, Flook, P. and V. French. E. and M. Freeman, J. and K. Hindell, B. and M. Howe, Ledeboer, Loewy and Riddell; these were frequently joined by the camp-based Baldwins. The activities of other campers are reported later.

The weather was very good for walking, and the Courmayeur district offers many delightful opportunities. Local hilltops or points of view such as Mont Chetif, Col Ferret, Col de la Seigne, the Pavillon and Mont de la Saxe were ascended and several will remember why the last named came to be referred to as Mont de la cul de sacs. We twice ventured as far as the little St. Bernard, and a memorable day in fine conditions was enjoyed on Mont Lancebranlette. Most people, including Baldwins minor, completed most of these ascents.

Climbing conditions were not tested severely by the hotel party, who were perhaps carrying rather too many years for ascents as high and steep as the south side of Mont Blanc. Nevertheless the Geant, Tour Ronde and Gran Paradiso were conquered, mostly by Keith Hindell, though a large party completed Gran Paradiso. Keith was last seen on his way up the Brenva Ridge.

Debu Bose

2 The Campers

The falling Pound drove us out of Switzerland but the euphoria of a woman P.M. sent the Lira to its most favourable rate for just about the period of the Meet. The Gods, however, remained unimpressed and gave us indifferent weather making most of the big routes unclimbable.

Like last year the Meet saw the Gentlemen comfortably housed in hotels and the Peasants in tents. As last year the Alpine Club were invited to attend. Statistics: There were 13 in the hotel party and 23 under canvas; there were more Public School/Oxbridge/Bar but fewer doctors under canvas than under tiles. The Peasants ate and drank more. Hogg lived up to his name, had two helpings of hors d'oeuvre but wasn't hors de combatted. The Gentlemen had more baths and smoked more cigars. The median age on the camp-site was below 30, from the hotel party David Riddeil celebrated his 76th birthday. Many happy returns.

On a more serious note, this was one of the most successful Alpine Meets I have attended. From the camp-site plans were made for most of the big routes in the area. Route Major and the Brenva Ridge were unsuccessful because of bad weather but the Frontier Ridge was done from the Torino Hut with a very early start. Other routes were climbed on the Geant, Tour Ronde, Aig de Rochefort and the Grandes Jorasses. A few ambled up to the Madonna on the Gran Paradiso to pray for good weather but some others were rained out trying to climb from Tre la Tete. Jeff Harris and Steve climbed Mt. Blanc from the Gonella Hut in very bad weather, a very creditable performance in the circumstances. Another member soloed the right hand edge of the North Face of Ciarforon, a route not mentioned in the English guide book. Special mention must be made of the two young lady members Jane Gamble and Miriam Baldwin, both of whom had a very successful season climbing most of the big routes.

The two outstanding features of the Meet were the youth of the members attending and the number of hard routes climbed and attempted.

We have come a long way indeed.

AUTUMN MEET, PATTERDALE, OCTOBER

S. M. Freeman

We departed from custom by arranging a buffet supper in the hut on Saturday evening, instead of going out to an hotel for dinner. The event was tremendously successful socially and gastronomically for the 18 people present. This number was disappointingly few, perhaps because the A.C. had held a Lakes meet and dinner only a week before, and joint members found the repeat journey too much. It has been suggested alternatively that the idea of a buffet supper did not attract members. If this is so, they made a great mistake. Not merely was there enough food, wine and beer to exceed the capacity of everyone present, there was enough of every course and every individual dish and bottle to achieve this result. Moreover the ladies, under the command of Marion Porteous, had provided not merely the usual cold dishes, but a range of hot dishes from savoury pies and sausage rolls at one end to apple pie at the other, everything possible being made from fresh garden produce and of a quality not obtainable in an hotel. All this for £3 a head, plus freedom and room to move around and converse socially.

Good looking weather on the Saturday was slightly marred by a stiff breeze on top, which cut short the Old People's Walk organised by the meet leader. Even sturdy young people found similar problems on Dow Crag. Others took walks of various degrees of vigour, but the really energetic ones were engaged in preparing supper, for which very many thanks. Sunday started bright but degenerated into rain in the afternoon, nevertheless permitting various short day walks befitting a Sunday when most people have to get home.

1981 MEETS

i

Alasdair Andrews

Volunteers are required to organise meets in 1981 to the Alps and to various parts of the United Kingdom and **Ireland**. The duties are minimal and if any one can assist will they please contact Alasdair Andrews by mid July 1980.

MEMBERS CLIMBS AND EXCURSIONS

Alasdair Andrews

A fairly quiet year with only 40 days on the hills. The best winter conditions for years were marred by my inability to get out of Edinburgh at weekends because of a strike by the men who grit the city roads.

In late July 12 members and friends assembled in Pralognan, in the heart of Vanoise National Park. From the Peclet-Polset hut the Aiguille de Polset was climbed by a circuitous glacier route with Geoff Bone, Tony and Suzanne Strawther. Later Geoff Bone and I climbed the Grande Casse from the Felix Faure Hut by the "Grande Peint". The English guide book underestimates the difficulty of the climb which is harder than P.D. Inf. The views from the summit were superb — seas of alps in every direction. The descent was tedious as the snow had turned to porridge.

The Vanoise is an excellent area — good cheap camp sites, food and wine and an abundance of fine hills and huts.

Jane and Ken Baldry

1979 has been a busy holiday year for us, starting as usual with a couple of weeks skiing in Kitzbuhel. We were both really too tired to make the best of this although we did all the new runs opened out by the extended lift system, including going to Pass Thurn on skis. Ken laid the ghost of the race track, which had scared him in 1976 by trundling down it several times and can now do in 20 minutes what Klammer can do in two! In June, we went to the area in the Western Berner Ob. that Ken visited alone last year. Starting from Lauenen, we crossed the Stublenipass to Lenk. As the main object was to see and film flowers, the walks were all highly successful. From Lenk, we went up to the Wildhorn Hut, a very pleasant tramp up a series of hanging valleys. It is not much visited by the British. Next day, we were one of four ropes up the Wildhorn, all of different nationalities, French, Swiss, German and us. One of the Jerries dropped a rock on Jane's arm which bruised it badly. So, what with full rucksacks, we were last up but were in time for an International Summit photo which duly appeared in the West German press. While the others returned to the hut, we went down to the Rawil Barrage by an atrocious path. Not recommended. The dam stands alone without a lake as they got their geology wrong and it is unsafe. A pity as the area is now messed up. We took a bus to Montana.

Montana proved to be just as chilly as in 1974 but, on our rest day there, Jane found some more flowers she had been hunting. We took the cable car to the Plaine Morte in thick cloud and, with some difficulty, found the Wildstrubel Hut. We walked too far on the same compass bearing and found ourselves groping round the flanks of the Rohrbachstein. After lunch, we went back to Lenk by the Rawil Pass path, which was largely snowed up and labelled, 'Gesperrt' at the bottom. We then crossed the Hahnenmoos to Adelboden with Ken chanting, 'There's a Mudwort round the corner and a Nastia in the next field'.

Last year, the Engstligenalp was deep in skiable snow but this year, it was more like a garden although only a fortnight later. As we only had a week and a half, we now made for home, calling on our friend Heinz on the way. A week in Venice in September lacked mountaineering interest!

In October, Jane had to attend a Food Technology conference in Einsiedeln, Schwyz and Ken went along to walk map 236. The weather was exceptionally good for the time of year and he got in three days of walking, partly round the Swiss Army who mortared him off the Druesberg but left the Gross Mythen and Chli Aubrig safe. Both are highly recommended view points. The Autumn colours grew with the week. This sort of opportunity is not to be missed as who would otherwise go to Einsiedeln? Roman Catholics actually as there is a Benedictine Monastery with a Black Madonna, looking suspiciously like Diana of the Ephesians and the object of pilgrimages in the past.

We are off to Davos in January and probably, to the Real Mountains in the Autumn again.

Hamish M. Brown

Two autumn 'tours' in Ireland went very well. The Irish hills are even less frequented, and as good as the Scottish and deserve to be better known. The winter month in the N.W. of Scotland seems to be a regular habit now — as does escaping off to Morocco for February-April. This year saw a local club meet there, to climb and ski and later I had an American party while the highlight was a week-long, high-level traverse of "the Ridge of Dreams" — the main spine from Toubkal east, rarely, if ever tackled in winter, and giving superb climbing at times over many peaks, never dropping below the 3000 m mark. (See an article in this number too). 1979 though was the year of the Groat's End Walk, a 2,500 mile, 250,000 ft of ascent, all on foot, stravaig to link up a variety of interesting things: a north coast trek, a north-south over 33 Munros, the West Highland Way, completing a 6th round of the Munros, canoeing the River Forth, a Borders Walk, the Pennine Way, the English, Welsh and Irish 3,000ders, including a coast-to-coast across Ireland and the first foot-link of the Four country summits of Ben Nevis, Scafell Pike, Snowdon and Garauntoohill, north-south through Wales over the delightful mountains there and finally the hills and coast of the South West to finish after about six months on the way! This will no doubt be turned into a book. "Hamish's Mountain

Walk" has gone into a fifth printing and seems to be being used as a guide among the Munro fanatics as well as simply being read by those who enjoy the Highlands.

Walter Kirstein

The end of 1978 and beginning of 1979 saw Bertha and me in the Southern Hemisphere on a visit to Australia at the invitation of Australian friends whom I had met while skiing in St. Moritz in 1977 and 1978. A visit to New Zealand was also included but due to a strike at Sydney Airport I was unable to include a trip to Mount Cook, South Island as originally intended and had to be content with a visit to Auckland, North Island.

Our stay at Pittwater, 30 miles north of Sydney was a memorable one. Arriving at the entrance to the house by way of private motor-boat and private jetty was certainly an unusual experience. National Park land extended for miles at the rear of the house where kangaroo could suddenly surprise one during an afternoon walk. Colourful parakeets and laughing kookaburras were regular visitors to the garden and the sight of upwards of 100 yachts sailing past the house during the frequent regattas was an unforgettable spectacle.

We returned by way of California and as usual I went skiing with my daughter and her family in the Sierra Nevada mountains. Powder snow was as good as ever and we had great fun and perfect conditions for skiing.

Skiing in the Engadine in March was not so good. It snowed much too much during the 3 weeks I was there and I had only 5 days of sunshine. On one of those days I got a request from a few skiers to take them down the Morteratsch. What a wonderful day we had — rarely have I seen Palu and Bernina looking more beautiful.

In early June Bertha and I travelled to Dundonnel to join the Meet. I found walking in Scotland hard and I was sorry for my companions whom I held back. I did admire those beautiful sunsets over the Western Isles.

In July Stuart Ferguson and I climbed the Cacciabella in the Bregaglia. I loved the somewhat easy climbing and the magnificent views but felt rather uneasy glissading down a steep gully though I was roped securely by the guide, the guardian of the Sciora hut. Only when the gully petered out into a less steep slope and we could take the rope off, did the glissading become pure pleasure. On the walk back to the hut after the climb I felt very tired and stayed a second night at the hut.

In Pontresina I had a pleasant surprise when Les and Barbara Swindin appeared and later took Stuart and I across "Las Sours" — an easy, rather exposed but very enjoyable rock climb.

End of September I met them again in the Lake District and Les took me up a diff. in Borrowdale, which I found much harder than only diff.

Brooke Midgley

With a winter as good as 1978/79 it got off to a 'cracking' start with skiing in the Peak District on New Year's Day and for the following four weekends. The children continue to improve and I seem to get worse.

In early February Peter Boyes and I sneaked a couple of days at Rhyd-ddu. We had one foul day in knee deep slush, but the following day was perfect and we galloped (very slowly) up and down short gulleys on Yr Aran and up the very impressive ridge on Snowdon's south flank.

Northern Dinner weekend — two easy gulleys with Mike Carter, Peter Boyes and a guest, Colin Barnard. On the Saturday we were accompanied by my wife and daughter Denise (11) and Mike's daughter Alison (11), all suitably cramponed and axed (Not Told).

Mid February - more local skiing - fairly icy but better than working.

March Maintenance Meet at the Hut — poor weather so no hardship to stay in and work.

Easter — managed to have a couple of weeks skiing in Italy in the Aosta Valley — mainly at La Thuile. The weather was excellent and it was a very enjoyable holiday. The children now ski so much better than I that I am convinced that I should either give up or not take them any more!

May — Cwm Eigiau meet in perfect surroundings and weather; the company was good too. Saturday saw a mass attack on Amphitheatre Buttress. Denise, the 11 year old elder daughter managed the first pitch with difficulty as she was too short to reach the holds. So we climbed off as it was going to take too long and we went for a walk over Carnedd Llywellyn. There was still snow around and in good condition. The rest of the family paddled and sunbathed all day. On Sunday all the family paddled and sunbathed, another good weekend.

May Bank Holiday weekend we went to Patterdale, meeting Peter Boyes and family there. The weekend was mixed with regard to weather and activities which included walking in showery weather, rock climbing in warm sun and sailing in pouring rain. All very enjoyable.

Back to Italy in June/July for two weeks in the Aosta Valley. We had excellent weather and did a fair amount of pass dashing to try to get fit and enjoyed some great scenery. We visited Col Serena, Col Gd. Ferrett and Col de la Seigne amongst others. Early in the holiday the snow line was quite low but it receded rapidly throughout the holiday. We managed some skiing on Piccolo St. Bernard Pass and a six year old Italian friend of the children joined us — well she was not as good as me. We also had a day skiing on the Géant Glacier to try out my new skis. They were bought to reinstate my superiority and failed miserably.

We all went up to the Vittorio Emmanuel Hut and Denise and I climbed La Tressenta (3609m). It was her first alpine peak and we had perfect weather and snow conditions, going up part way on front points and glissading down some of the way. It was a very enjoyable day out and we went all the way down to Pont in the afternoon. She slept well that night.

Early August we went back to Patterdale with Mike Carter and family and a group of other friends. We had one good day (out of two) with the children doing Helvellyn via Swirral and Striding Edges keeping to the highest points maximising scrambling. Very pleasant, warm rock and surprisingly few people around.

Tony Strather's meet at Bryn Hafod — well what can one say about Tony's meets good company and FOUL weather! — how does he do it so consistently — there's no substitute for talent! He is a Water Diviner I think. He took Suzanne, Denise and me on an afternoon's stroll/swim over Cader Idris and out to the coast. The views out to sea and over the estuary are probably some of the best I have ever seen!! Keep trying Tony.

Mid September we met Eileen and Oliver St John at the George Starkey Hut; it was their first visit and our first that month. We had a great day over Helvellyn via Swirral and Striding Edges (for a change) including a dash up and down the ridge to collect a few more tops to extend the exercise for the older members of the party. Sunday was rather murky but Oliver had me out very early for a morning run up the North face of Place Fell and then the round of Boardale and back via the lake to the hut for lunch! good job he does not come too often or I may get fit.

The October meet at the hut was a great success as it included a buffet supper

organised by Betty Freeman and Marion Porteous and assisted by the other ladies attending the meet. To work up an appetite Tony Strather and I had a stroll up Red Screes from Kirkstone Pass then all points north to Catstey Cam via Scandale pass, Hart and Dove Crags, Fairfield, Grisedale Tarn, Dollywaggon Pike, Helvellyn etc. We came back to the hut in good time for tea and biscuits before getting down to some serious eating. Sunday was wet and windy (Tony weather) so he took Arline and me for a short walk to Angle Tarn, Hayeswater and back via Hartsop.

Maintenance meets almost invariably have perfect weather and this one excelled itself. The children sneaked off and did very little to no work. They sensibly spent their time paddling and swimming in the river — blue suits them! A good turn out of T.C.C. members with a sprinkling of A.B.M. members ensured a lot of work was done and quite a few also managed a dash up some hills.

At the end of October we had a trip to the Cleveland Hills in North Yorkshire to join Mike Carter and family for the weekend. I had a stroll along the escarpment by Sutton Bank while Mike did his stint as Duty Instructor at the Gliding Club. Denise added to her list of new experiences when Mike took her up for a flight and let her take the controls — nothing to do with mountaineering but it is in beautiful hill country.

Barrie Pennett

My year began with a short walk on The Chevin above Otley, in Wharfedale. It was a bitterly cold day but nevertheless the walk was most enjoyable. The bad weather then settled in and curtailed walking for several weeks, mainly due to the difficulty of getting to and from places of interest by car.

On Good Friday I visited Upper Wharfedale where I climbed Buckden Pike, 2,302 ft. There was still snow on the upper slopes but the view from the top was fine. On April 29 my wife, Valerie, son, David (9), a friend, and myself did a 12 mile walk in the Wharfedale district. We walked from Lindley Bridge alongside Lindley Reservoir to Norwood Edge to Fewston and Timble, where we had beer and sampled the well-known Timble Inn sausage sandwiches. After a lengthy stay at the Inn we walked to Swinsty Hall and by Swinsty Reservoir to Lindley Reservoir and Lindley Bridge. On May 6 accompanied by a friend I walked from Bolton Abbey to Lower Barden Reservoir, Upper Barden Reservoir and then over Barden Access Moor, where we came across an adder, to Drebley and then proceeded across the River Wharfe by using the stepping stones and then on to Barden Bridge (Barden Tower) and Bolton Abbey to complete a 16 mile walk.

On May 13, which turned out to be a very hot day, I joined forces with Guy Collinson, a member of the Long Distance Walking Club and a "Centurion" himself and photographer, Bryan Waite, and completed "The Three Peaks," walk. It was a delightful walk from start to finish. We set off from Horton-in-Ribblesdale and did Penyghent (2,273 ft), Whernside (2,419 ft) and Ingleborough (2,373 ft).

On June 1st my wife and I and son David travelled to Scotland where we stayed at Luss, on Loch Lomond. We had a walk up Glen Luss. The next day, June 2nd, we travelled to the Isle of Mull where we had taken a cottage at Torloisk. That night we walked to Torr An Ocha, a view point which is only some 216 ft, but nevertheless a most enjoyable walk. June 3rd saw us at Calgary Bay where I walked up Cnoc Udmall and A'Charraig.

It was very hot on June 4th when we drove to Traigh Dove Dhubhaig and in glorious weather my wife, Valerie, son, David (9) and myself climbed Ben More (3,171 ft). Unfortunately as we reached the top of the mountain, which is the highest on the island, thick mist came down and spoiled the view.

The next day (June 5) was dull and misty so we decided to visit Tobermory and from there we walked round to Rubha Nan Gall Lighthouse at Bloody Bay. On the journey to

Tobermory we climbed Caoldairidh, another view point. June 6 saw us on Iona and after visiting the Abbey and other places of interest we enjoyed a short walk on the island which included a stroll up Dunl Fell (332 ft) — the highest fell on the island!

The next day, June 7 was dull and cloudy so we visited Duart Castle and Torosay Castle.

It was very warm and sunny on June 8, our last day on Mull, so we decided to climb the hills behind the cottage. And what a most enjoyable day it turned out to be. We climbed Crauchan (1,170 ft) and walked on to Cnoc An Da Chinn (1,170 ft), Beinn Bhuidhe (936 ft) and Ben Na Clach Corral (945 ft). We returned to the cottage for a meal but then my son decided to climb Crauchan (1,170 ft) again — this time with some friends. My wife and I walked up Druim Na Cille which provided us with glorious views including a long distance view of Iona.

In August we had a holiday in South Wales where we did a number of short walks on the delightful Pembrokeshire Coastal path. One evening we walked a short stretch from Manorbier to Stackpole Quay and Barafundle Bay. Another evening we did a short circular walk taking in the coastal path from Manorbier to Swanlake Bay. We also walked in the area of St. Govan's Head; on the delightful headland above Manorbier and around Whitesand Bay and the headland at St. David's.

During August and September we did short walks in the Wharfedale area of Yorkshire taking in Ilkley Moors where my son David did a little scrambling on the Cow and Calf Rocks and Brimham Rocks.

October saw us in the Lake District where we once again stayed at a farm in Borrowdale. The weather was fine and sunny for most of the holiday with only two half days of rain. On October 7 we did a seven miles walk from Newlands valley taking in High Snab, Robinson (2,417 ft), Hindscarth (2,385 ft) and Scope End, finishing at Newlands. The next day we visited Buttermere where we climbed Fleetwith Pike (2,126 ft), Honister Crag (2,070 ft) and then walked over to Haystacks (1,900 ft) before returning to Buttermere by Scarth Gap. On October 9, which was a bright day, we climbed Eagle Crag (1,650 ft) by Wainwright's "A" route and then walked the ridge to Sergeant's Crag (1,873 ft). This walk is an absolute delight with glorious views of the Langstrath Valley and surrounding peaks.

The next day (October 10) was a little damp so we took the opportunity to visit Keswick for shopping. However, in the afternoon, the weather cleared up a little and we did a short walk on Barrow (1,494 ft) which is reached from Braithwaite. The morning of October 11 was fine and sunny so we climbed Causey Pike (2,035 ft) by Rowling End. We continued over Scar Crags (2,205 ft) and then to Sail Pass before making for Outerside (1,863 ft). It was while we were enjoying our packed lunch on this fell that it began to rain heavily. We continued over the top of Barrow and then left the fell by the scree slope. On October 12 we climbed Ard Crags (1,860 ft) by Aikin Knott and then proceeded to Knott Rigg (1,790 ft). We also visited little Latrigg (1,203 ft).

We also did a little walking in the Autumn in the Wharfedale district taking in such places as Beamsley Beacon near Ilkley, and Almscliff Crag at Huby near Otley.

Oliver St. John and family

One of my nephews, at 17, had got no closer to an Alpine peak than reading books, though at a very early age, about 8, he climbed a 4000 m peak in the High Atlas with my children. He wanted a chance to set foot on a real peak. So he joined my son Peter and I for a fortnight at the end of July. The weather was almost uniformly good: on the only night that it rained, we were "enjoying" a very informal bivouac on an inhospitable mountainside. We were therefore able to make a number of attractive, if easy, expeditions from our house in the Aosta valley. Behind the house, between La Thuille and the Val Grisanche, is an area of minor peaks culminating in the Testa del Rutor, which we explored to get some sort of training. We then drove off to climb Mont Velan, from By, which is reached by a remarkable new road, above Oliomont. Here we found the delightful Bivouac Savoie which, whilst having only bare facilities, was spotlessly clean and magnificently situated an easy hour below the Col de Valsorey. The ascent of Mont Velan is very straightforward, but the ice scenery is very fine indeed.

We then needed some altitude acclimatisation, so we left early one morning for Gressoney, and arrived at the Gnifetti Hut by midday. The weather was overcast, the snow was still firm, so we traversed the Punta Vincent in the afternoon. Early next morning we went up to the Zumsteinspitze, but the ridge along to the Dufourspitze, alas, was in bad condition, so we returned over the Schwarzhorn and Balmenhorn and home for tea.

Our final plan was to climb Mont Blanc by the Aiguilles Grises route: the weather was uncertain, the snow being reported as very soft, so we were not confident of success as we went up to the Gonella Hut. Here, we were well looked after by a vacation student from Turin University who was standing in for the hut-keeper. No one was expecting good weather: we retired very early, but got no sleep as the others had different ideas. Our alarm got us up at 11.55 p.m., by midnight we had our litre of boiling water for coffee and by 12.20 were out, in bright moonlight, onto the glacier.

It was a fairy-like landscape, the snow was perfect, and we wandered through the glacier obstacles, and quickly arrived at the Col de Bionnassay. The moon continued bright, and we followed up the ridge and eventually got to the top of Mont Blanc with the rising sun, just before 6 a.m. Our early start had paid off well, as the snow rapidly deteriorated, and by the time we got back to the hut, about 10 a.m., the snow on the glacier was thoroughly unpleasant. The other parties, who had started later, had turned back.

No 'hard' routes, but some exhilarating experiences, a worthy introduction to the Alps for any youngster.

Ernst Sondheimer

I have decided that I am now a 'veteran' who is allowed to put pleasure above duty in his mountain ventures. Following this precept my trips to the hills in 1979 were all unspectacular and highly enjoyable.

New Year: with David Cutforth and son Nicholas at their Lake District base in Beatrix Potter country. It was wintry! The gale wind blew us back from the 'Ambleside Horseshoe', but an icy Dow Crag was ascended (from the gentle side) on a beautiful and sunny day. It was not until I was 100 yards from home that I slipped on London ice and badly sprained an ankle!

April: the ankle restored, I visited fellow-mathematician Nick Bingham at his base in Dolgellau. A mild spring sun shone for our South-North traverse of the Rhinogs — a notoriously rough walk in very beautiful and lonely country. Next day conditions were back to 'normal' on Cader Idris (i.e. wind, mist and rain).

May/June: at the A.B.M.S.A.C. Dundonnell meet. Good company at the excellent 'Smiddy' hut and in the hotel bar. A day of sun and snow over Fannich tops; on another day two of us were chased by rain showers along the An Teallach ridge. Finally a two-day solo walk starting from Kinlochewe, following the lovely track along the north side of Loch Maree and into the hills to bivouac at Carnmore, then an ascent of A'Mhaighdean (Scotland's 'remotest Munro') in the early morning sun, and later past Shenavall (having waded across the river and fallen into the bog photographing the deer) to return to Dundonnell late, tired and highly satisfied.

July: a weekend walking in Derbyshire with the Westfield College Maths Department, and a week in Connemara to feast on salmon and to discover the very special delights of Irish hill-walking.

August/September: my Alpine fortnight started at Varenna where David Cutforth was waiting to join my train, a colourful figure with white shorts, sun hat and an enormous red rucksack. I had come by air to Geneva and overnight by train to Milan, spending part of the night in the waiting room at Lausanne where the police arrived around 2 a.m. to check everyone's papers. They accepted that I wasn't an illegal immigrant, but I don't really recommend this mode of travel. David and I intended to do the 'Sentiero Roma', the high-level traverse of the Bregaglia on the Italian side. In the fierce heat of our first day we struggled with our full packs up the steep path into the Val Codera and found it trying — even the local Italians seemed to be wilting. That night the weather broke, and next day the mist and rain and new snow made us lose our way in trying 'o cross the main ridge — it was a long return all the way down back to the Rifugio Brasca. But the Rifugio in its idyllic setting was a good spot for a day's rest, the weather relented and we were able to push on to the Gianetti and Allievi huts, through spectacular rock scenery and over some airy ups-and-downs. The Italian huts are expensive but comfortable and offer good food and everyone is very friendly - the region has lost its former remoteness but still seems uncrowded even in mid-season. (And English visitors are rare.) At the Allievi hut we decided that as veterans we had by now earned another rest, so we descended through the veautiful Val di Mello to lunch on 'pizzocheri' (famous local dish) at San Martino and then to proceed by bus/train/bus to Chiesa in Valmalenco where we found an excellent cheap pensione. We had hoped to cross the Muretto Pass into Switzerland, but more heavy rain prevented this and I travelled alone back to Varenna and spent a romantic evening taking the boat to Bellagio and the Villa Melzi where a spectacular thunderstorm produced bangs and flashes over the lake. Next day into Switzerland to meet my Swiss friends at Spiez, for a week in the Western Bernese Oberland. Up to the Wildhorn hut in more rain which higher up turned to snow. That was the start of a week of brilliant weather! We climbed the Niesenhorn and the Wildhorn, then crossed the Schneidejoch to the Rawilpass track and up to the Wildstrubel hut (with tremendous views of the Pennine Alps), and finished with a traverse of the Wildstrubel tops to the Engstligenalp. These are easy and highly scenic routes over mountains not too big for veterans, although - with the masses of new snow everywhere — the final descent of the crevassed Strubel glacier was actually no mere stroll. Next year our Swiss Alpine week is scheduled to take place in Scotland!

Les Swindin

The highlight of my mountain activities this year must be the High Level Route which I did on skis at Easter with Barbara, Jeremy Whitehead and a friend from the Lincoln M.C., Paul Luton. We had almost perfect weather the whole time and having completed the classic route as far as Zermatt, continued to Saas Fee taking in Castor and the Alphubel en route.

The year had started with our, by now customary, trip to Scotland. We caravanned in Aviemore again, and spent most of our time on the 'hill' skiing. The conditions were by far and away the best I've encountered north of the border for skiing, and as climbing conditions were not so good we were still able to have a most enjoyable week.

Excellent winter climbing conditions prevailed for an extended period in the south, and when petrol was available and roads weren't blocked I managed to get a few worthwhile routes done in Wales and the Lakes.

We got to Scotland again at Whitsun, spending a week in and around Glen Nevis. During the week Barbara and I did over 30,000 feet of ascent walking the Mamores, the Aonachs, the Grey Corries and the Ben. At the same time we took the opportunity to climb a few of the 'Classic Rock' routes in the area.

This year's climbs in the alps are described elsewhere in the Journal and proved most satisfying.

Rock climbing as usual occupied a good deal of my time. This year I've done more climbing on 'local' crags near Gloucester i.e. in the Wye Valley and the Avon Gorge. For the first time I visited the South West enjoying an excellent weekend at Bosigran. I also spent time on the more familiar crags of our mountain regions and even managed to add two 'Hard Rock' routes to my list.

During the year I attended only one A.B.M. meet, the joint one with the A.C. in Wastdale. In the autumn, on an A.C. meet, I climbed again with Walter Kirstein. We visited Borrowdale again and did Greenup Edge on Lining Crag.

Shortly before writing this account I made my first winter climb of this next season in North Wales. Let us hope that conditions match those of that year now coming to a close.

Nigel E. D. Walker

End of July to beginning of August in Mittenwald, West Germany. Spent a day walking in the Karwendel Valley with a group of Germans in poor weather. Climbed Benedictenwand (west peak) from Tutzinger Hut in poor weather with Wilhelm Winneberger. Also climbed Wörner from the Northwest Ridge with Willy Swerger in better weather.

BOOK REVIEW

"On Mountains", by John Jerome (Victor Gollancz Ltd); 262 pages, 8 diagrams

This book is subtitled "Thinking about Terrain", which correctly indicates its subject matter and its discursive nature. The author is American, his illustrations and examples come mostly from the land he knows best, and his style is in keeping; by no means Mandarin, but easy to follow. No frills. Succinct. Like this.

The author is a skier, and he informs us that he is not a climber. Nevertheless he reveals in several introductory chapters a wide acquaintance with and a deep affection for mountains. The book ranges widely in subject matter, so that most topics can be treated only selectively, making this a work better suited to the general reader than to the mountaineer. Almost half the book, however, is given to mountain geology, which is treated much more fully than other matters.

The book is divided into three sub-books, and the first, entitled "Mountain Making", contains the geology. The author first notes the location of the main belts of mountains all over the globe, then relates classic theories of the earth's interior, up to the Moho discontinuity theory. The classic view is contrasted with modern theory including the refinements of lithosphere, asthenosphere and so on. The origin and location of mountains is then explained in terms of continental drift and collision, helped by plate theory. The subsequent development of mountain form is then explained in terms of classical and generally accepted views of faults, folds, domes and volcanoes, with further chapters on the subsequent effects of erosion by various agents, particularly

glaciation. The chapters on continental drift cover matters which have been the subject of much controversy, and scholars may perhaps disagree with some statements. Your reviewer, who has a smattering of natural science other than geology, found the account lucid and comprehensive, of real value as an aide memoire, guide to observation in the field and help to talk round the hut dinner table.

Book two, entitled "Going There", begins with a chapter on "The Hard Men". This deals almost entirely with the Eiger, and omits mention of activities nearer to the author's home, such as rock climbing in Yosemite or mountaineering elsewhere on the American continents. This seems a little odd as the author appears not to have a close acquaintance with the Oberland, as judged from his reference (p.124) to the railway to the summit of the Jungfrau.

The rest of book two concerns weather, skiing, snow and avalanches. Chapter 12 on "snow" is at sufficient length to provide an interesting account of snowflakes, snowfall and ice formation.

Book three, "The Mountain Life", covers flora, fauna, mankind and myth. This, like most of book two, is pleasantly readable but not for the specialist.

S.M.F.

