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THE ASSOCIATION OF BRITISH MEMBERS OF THE SWISS ALPINE CLUB

JOURNAL 1981

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DIARY FOR 1981

Wed. 21 Jan.

30 Jan.-1 Feb.

13-15 Feb.

Wed. 25 Feb.

13-15 March

Wed. 25 March

3-5 April

16-21 April

16-21 April

Wed. 29 April

1-4 May

23-30 May

22-25 May

Wed. 27 May

12-14 June

Wed. 17 June

3-5 July

25 July-15 Aug.

26 July-8 Aug.

15-29 Aug.

28-31 Aug.

18-20 Sept.

Wed. 23 Sept.

2-4 Oct.

Wed. 21 Oct.

6-8 Nov.

Wed. 11 Nov.

Wed. 25 Nov.

23 Dec.-4 Jan. 1982

Maurice Bennett. "New Zealand" to be followed by a Fondue Evening.

Wasdale with A.C. — Peter Fleming.

Northern Dinner — Patterdale. Brooke Midgley.

Richard Coatsworth and John Murray, "Manang — a walk around Annapurna"

Llanrwst — Ogwen, John Murray.

Margaret Darvall, "Travels with a Rope".

Patterdale — Hut Maintenance, Richard Coatsworth.

Easter — Llanrwst, Maurice Freeman.

Easter — Patterdale with T.C.C. Richard Coatsworth.

Brian Stephenson, "Swiss Mountain Railways".

Patterdale with T.C.C. Richard Coatsworth.

Spring Bank Holiday — Scotland — Kintail, Alasdair Andrews.

Patterdale with T.C.C. Richard Coatsworth.

Buffet Party and Members' Evening.

Yorkshire Dales, Bert Bowes.

Selected Films (from S.N.T.O. Film Library).

Llanrwst, Tony Strawther.

Informal Alpine Meet — Zermatt Valley with A.C. — Mike Pinney.

Patterdale — Family Meet. Richard Coatsworth.

Official Alpine Meet — Arolla. Harry Archer.

Patterdale with T.C.C. Richard Coatsworth.

Llanrwst — Snowdon. Mike Bingham.

Alpine Season and Meet.

Buffet Party — Patterdale. Marion Porteous.

Charles Warren. "English Water Colour Artists and the Mountain Scene" (joint meeting with the Alpine Club).

Llanrwst — Idwal. Mike Pinney.

Annual Dinner.

Annual General Meeting.

Patterdale with T.C.C. Richard Coatsworth.

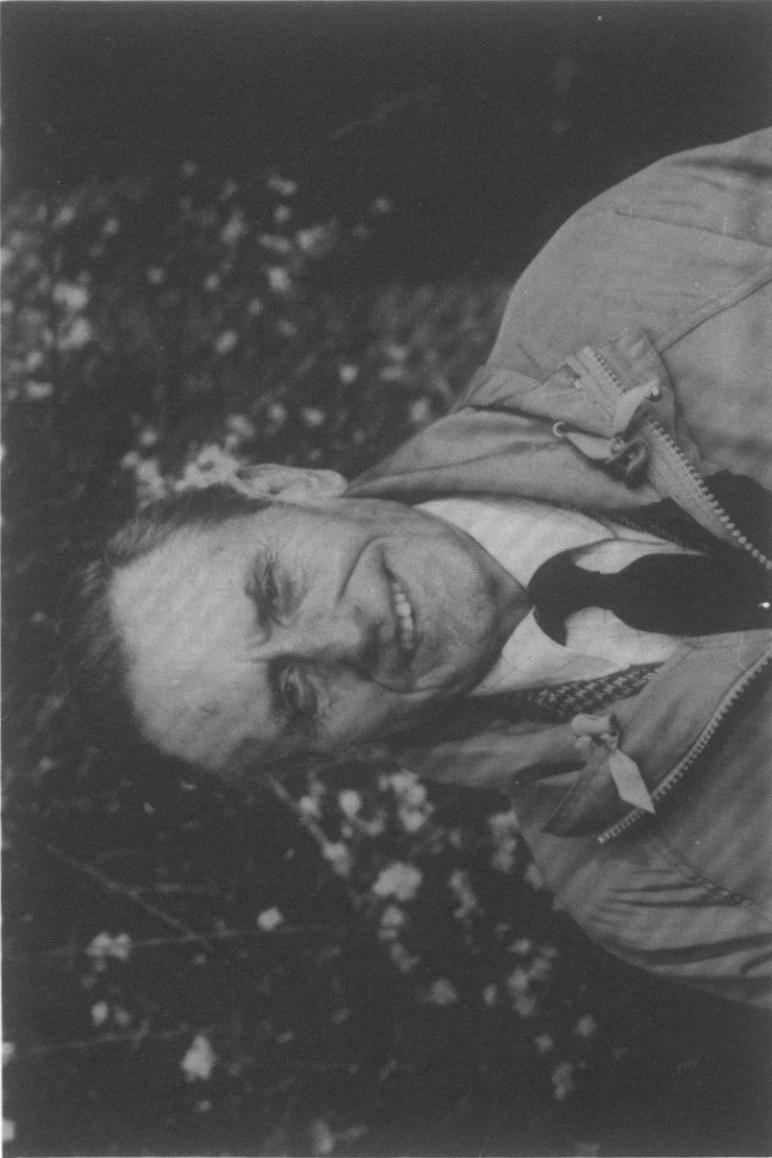
Lecture meets will be held at the Alpine Club, 74 South Audley Street, London, W.1. at 7 p.m. It is proposed to offer cash bar refreshments before lectures. Would those Members who prefer to have dinner at the Park Coffee House, Britannia Hotel, please make their own arrangements. Please book with the person named for outdoor meets.

A CHANGE OF PRESIDENT

Paddy Boulter's term as President has been eventful and distinguished. Full membership of the S.A.C. has declined for well known reasons, whilst affiliate membership of the A.B.M. has risen substantially. Changes have been made in our business procedure, largely on Paddy's initiative, to meet this situation. The committee meetings have been increased in duration and reduced in number, and one meeting now takes place annually at Patterdale. More time has also been given to the A.G.M., by separating it from the Annual Dinner. The President has been very active on the diplomatic front, sparing time for several visits to Switzerland for talks with high S.A.C. officers on steps necessary to safeguard the A.B.M.'s interests. The George Starkey hut has become a financially sound institution during the same period.

Despite all this, Paddy and Mary will be better known to many members for their great social success. They have continued to take a leading part in events such as the cheese and wine parties and fondue suppers, and have been at the very heart of social life at the hotel-based Alpine meets, which have been greatly enjoyed by increasing numbers despite falling membership numbers.

Many members must share the editor's view that his successor should ideally be someone well known to and respected by everyone from the Londoners to the Northern section, constantly seen at meets at all locations, and with a long and distinguished record of service to the Club. Peter Ledeboer fits this definition uniquely, and it is with great pleasure that we welcome him as our new President. He was the Hon. Secretary as long ago as 1963, first Chairman of the Hut Management Committee after having done so much to bring the hut project to fruition, a Vice-President until his present elevation, and goodness knows what else. He has been unofficial interpreter and go-between on many sticky occasions at meets and elsewhere, to the great advantage of the editor amongst others. He has climbed in many parts, and has invariably been a delightful hill companion. We wish him a happy and fruitful term of office. S.M.F.



Peter Ledeboer. The new President



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EDITORIAL

The Club policy concerning outdoor meets has been much discussed this year. At present the situation in Britain is clearer than our plans for the Alps, and can be explained first, using verbatim much of what Alasdair Andrews has written. He has decided to reshape the meets for 1981 for the following reasons.

- (a) Our cottage in North Wales is rarely if ever used.
- (b) The G.S. hut is underused on Bank Holiday weekends.
- (c) An earlier plan for a meet in Ireland has been shelved because Hamish Brown is organising a trip there in the Autumn on which several of our members are going.

We shall therefore hold the Spring Bank Holiday meet in Scotland again, possibly in Kintail; several people were disappointed that last year's plan to go there could not be carried out. (The alternative provided was a great success).

There seems to be little point in booking other clubs' huts in North Wales or other venues such as the Peak District or Brecon Beacons when our own premises are underused. Most of our 1981 meets will therefore be at Fron Francis or G.S. We may retain variety by designating individual G.S. meets as being particularly directed to nearby areas such as Langdale or Borrowdale, and making arrangements accordingly.

Fron Francis has been booked for five weekends including Easter. This hut holds only seven people, but John Byam-Grounds has generously offered us the use of his other cottage plus some accommodation in his own house for the Easter meet. Enquiries will also be made into hotel facilities in the area.

The Alpine meet situation will have been resolved in time for the New Year circular. The logic of Alasdair's analysis of locations of meets for some years past appears to indicate the Western Pennines as most appropriate, and that was where attention was being addressed first.

Last year's meet at Bivio was a great success for the rather elderly and not too ambitious climbers who attended. A meet of younger people was held in the Grindelwald area; for some years there has been found to be advantage in arranging a camping or similar meet in addition to the hotel based one. The two groups of people have rather different tastes in dates, so Alasdair is trying to arrange a conventional meet in mid or late August and a camping meet at a rather earlier date.

On another topic, much pleasure has been given to those of us who have long attended the Alpine meets by the election of Otto Stoller to honorary membership. No other guide is so well known to us, and no other has served us so faithfully over so long a period. We offer him all editorial felicitations.

It may be helpful to clarify the situation concerning the advantages of ABMSAC membership viz-a-viz use of the BMC card. Our SAC subscription costs £14 this year. Hut fees for us are 10 fr. per night including taxes, wood and water. We retain all our reciprocal rights in other Alpine countries. Holders of the £6 BMC card will pay 25 fr. per night in Swiss huts. All parties pay their local club subscriptions in addition. Members and prospective members can weigh this up in relation to their personal requirements.

Affiliate members will continue to enjoy all the home facilities of the Club including voting rights and use of the hut, and are cordially invited to all meets including those in Switzerland. They (spouses excepted) will not enjoy reduced rates in Swiss huts.

KILI — “FULLY EQUIPPED”

Ernst Sondheimer

The tourist route up Kilimanjaro to the highest point in Africa is described in many places (see for example in ‘Climber and Rambler’ for March 1978). In my case it was Mike Baker’s article in this journal, 8 years ago, which fired the ambition to try what sounded like the best and longest uphill walk in the world: what Mike could do solo in a day or three, I might perhaps manage, given enough support, in five or six. David Cutforth felt likewise, and last August we were finally on our way. Here, in diary form, is a summary of our adventure.

Preliminaries: Much earnest study, of course, of guide books, articles and maps. Worries about effects of altitude. Hopes of capturing Hamish Brown for the trip are, alas, unfulfilled. We wrote to the Marangu Hotel to book rooms and to ask them to make all necessary arrangements for our climb. Travel caused some headaches: the route via Nairobi is still ‘out’ (Kenya/Tanzania border remains closed); our original WEXAS flight to Kilimanjaro airport (via Addis Ababa) was cancelled; eventually we found a ‘cheap’ Air France flight to Dar es Salaam, still 350 miles from the mountain. Hotel advised travel onwards by overnight bus, as Air Tanzania schedules said to be uncertain and anyway booked up. Usual injections against an assortment of dread diseases. At end of July I went to Zermatt region for some training walks. Deep new snow everywhere, and failed to get to top of Mettelhorn (of all places) because of violent thunderstorm (I hoped it was not a bad omen). Camped next to hard-bitten Australian who told horror stories of effects of oedema. Wondered what one can do to acclimatise and was told to walk very slowly.

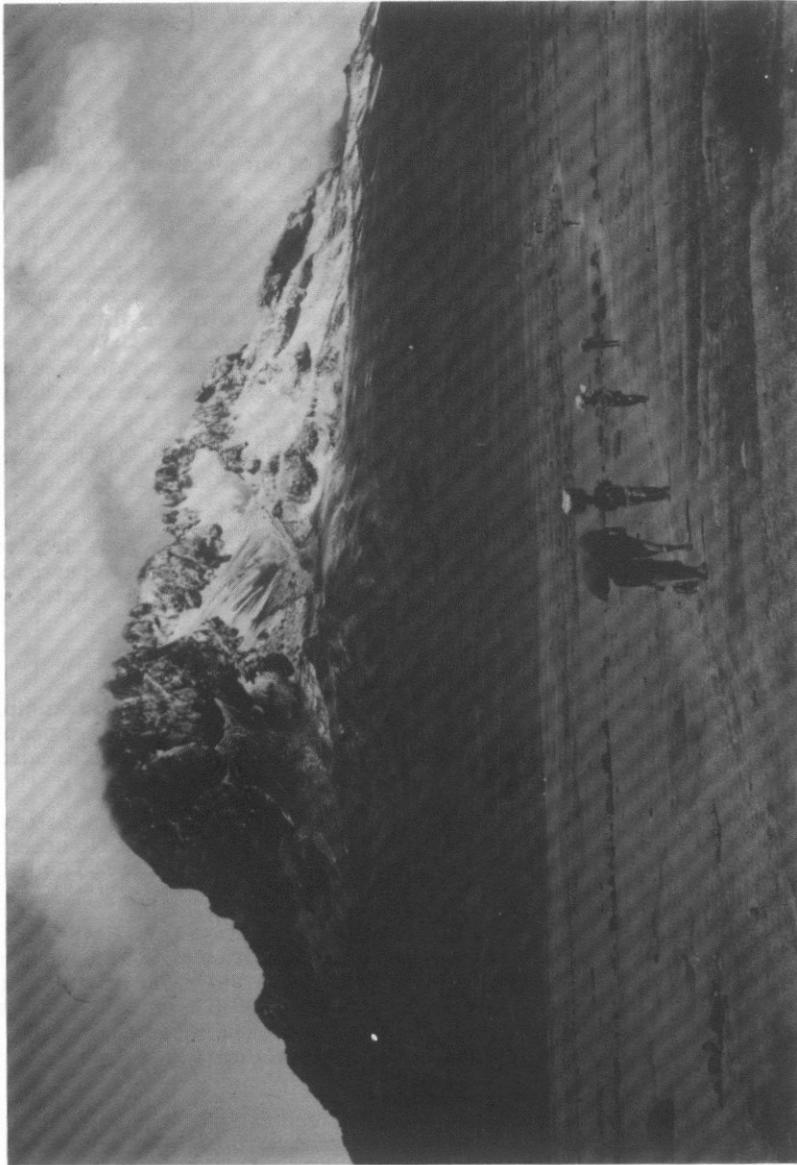
1/2 Aug. Meet David at Heathrow in the evening, air bus to Paris, overnight flight to Dar via Athens and Kigali (Rwanda). Agreeable journey, quite good meals. Fine view of our mountain, towering above the clouds 50 miles away.

2 Aug. Dar is hot and dusty. Change money, take airport bus to bus station. Milling crowd of would-be passengers, no white face in sight. Stand in queue for large part of the afternoon whilst those in front argue and David watches the luggage. Admire Masai warrior in full regalia. Eventually buy tickets to Moshi and feel the wait was worth while (about £4 each). Difficult to locate our bus, but finally we get on and it rattles off into the night.

3 Aug. Ancient bus races at speed over lousy road — amazingly it does not break down. Occasional stops at shacks to buy nuts and drink very sweet tea. At dawn we are on the Masai steppe, brown and vast, with hills in the distance. The weather is grey. We decide that on our return we’ll definitely go by air (and in fact we did so without trouble). At Moshi we change to local bus for Marangu, still 25 miles away. Scenery improves. Arrive at hotel feeling rather battered and find a little paradise: brilliant flowering trees, huge vegetable garden, lush coffee and banana plantations. We live in a bungalow with our own bath (the water is **sometimes** warm) and for under £10 a day get five meals thrown in. Who wants to climb a mountain? We venture on a stroll through the village: the local Chagga are a picturesque and lively lot and quite friendly, perhaps too much so — we learn to beware of unsolicited guides. Modern buildings are next to primitive thatched huts.

4/5 Aug. Rest day at hotel. David announces that his travellers’ cheques are missing (did it happen on that bus?) So extra day for return to Moshi and negotiations with bank. They try to be helpful, cancel the cheques but explain that replacement only possible in Dar es Salaam! I spot modern post office across the road and cable Janet to be so kind as to send some money. Hope it will be there when we return from the hill (it was). Return to hotel and talk to people. Most groups are on organised trips to the big

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game parks and do Kili as an extra; Germans and Japanese predominate. (Someone says that to climb Kili you need two phrases: 'Jambo' and 'Grüss Gott'.) Realise suddenly that climbing Kili is not really mountaineering. There's a story that it's the tough guys who succumb to mountain sickness on Kili, not the holiday-makers (sounds hopeful for me). In the evening there's an equipment check and a lecture on what's in store and how to behave on the mountain. Equipment consists essentially of warm clothes and a good walking stick: anything missing can be hired. We have brought our ice axes, duvet jackets and sleeping bags. The hotel people are friendly and efficient and have many years' experience in getting people up the mountain.

6 Aug. We are off — but no need for an alpine start. In the morning a crowd of expectant lads assembles in the yard, hoping for jobs as porters. Various parties are organised and sent on their way. We are introduced to our team: Simon (senior guide), George (assistant guide) and five porters — a personal one for each of us to carry our baggage, and three more to carry the food. They seem a friendly crowd. Conversation is carried on in broken English and such scraps of Swahili as we manage to pick up (Swahili is the national language, but the locals talk to each other in their own Chagga dialect). About mid-day we climb into a Landrover, drive to the Park Gate at 6000 ft. elevation, sign in and pay our dues and start walking into the rain forest. It is only 3 or 4 hours up to the Mandara hut. I soon regret that I'd followed advice to wear light shoes through the forest. The track is muddy and very slippery, and the forest looks gloomily impressive. In fact we are in grey mist and drizzle and I learn that 'dry season' need not mean that the weather actually is dry. I admire the porters, with regard shoes and heavy sacks balanced on their heads — they don't keep falling over! At Mandara it is still gloomy, but there is comfort enough. David and I share a 4-bunk room, hot water appears for wiping off the mud, and in the dining hall the table cloth has been spread out and dinner is served. We talk to an impressive lady who is the Assistant British Consul at Moshi. She tells us about a lone climber who went up the mountain from the Kenya side, ran into a Tanzanian patrol and had spent two weeks in prison before she heard about his plight and rescued him.

7 Aug. The day starts with 4-course breakfast of fruit, maize porridge, meat, egg, bread and jam plus coffee. Mountaineering *de luxe* indeed — who wants to slave uphill with a big load ever again? We keep hearing that there's sunshine just above, but the mist keeps moving up along with us. We peer at a crater and are off to the Horombo hut — 6 hours' walking across the moorland. At home I'm always so slow that I hold up the others, but here at last I come into my own. The watchword is '**pole, pole**', meaning that a very slow pace is *de rigueur*. (The Australian was right.) The path is excellent and not in the least steep, and all I need do is amble along and take photographs whenever I like. The vegetation looks particularly weird in the mist. Huge tree heaths loom and eventually we see the famous giant groundsel and pose under them. Interesting conversations on the way with Simon: he tells me he's been up Kili 350 times and I try to tell him about Scotland. He wants to know how many days it takes to climb a Scottish hill and how a refrigerator works. I do my best to explain.

8 Aug. We stay for the day at Horombo in order to acclimatise a bit (that makes ours a 6-day trip). Sunshine at last in the morning — Kibo gleams invitingly. We walk up to the Saddle between Kibo and Mawenzi — no chance of rain today, we are told. At the Saddle the sea of cloud catches up with us, and back at the hut we are drenched. Simon much concerned, collects our wet things and roasts them over his fire: they return next morning slightly scorched and smelling pleasantly of wood smoke. It rains hrd all that afternoon and night — is this **really** the dry season? Other parties arrive from on high and tell of mixed fortunes.

9 Aug. The weather clears — henceforth we stay above the cloud. Up to the Saddle again — Mawenzi covered with new snow looks wildly magnificent. More weird plants, identified as Giant Lobelia. Bright everlasting everywhere. We pass the 'Last Water' where the porters fill up. A desert landscape on the Saddle — are we really 14,000 ft. above the sea? Altitude no problem so far. We enjoy a beautiful evening at the Kibo hut

and eat and sleep quite well. Company mainly Japanese — one member proud that he is older than we are.

10 Aug. An alpine start at last! Up at 1, off at 1.45. The two guides come with us and carry our rucksacks. It is cold, but no worse than Monte Rosa, and very dark — especially when the lantern blows out (we manage to light it again). We have 3,000 ft. of altitude to gain, up the notorious scree slope to the crater rim at Gillman's Point. In fact the scree is good and the track is fair enough. The guide goes a bit too fast for us and the altitude begins to tell. A welcome rest at the Hans Meyer cave (named after the first conqueror of Kibo) for tea and a cigarette. On and upwards in the dark: at sunrise (spectacular enough) we still have a fair way to go. The pace becomes a very slow crawl indeed, with frequent halts. But finally we make it to Gillman's Point, where — after 6½ hours' weary slog — the sudden view across the huge crater, rimmed with ice cliffs sparkling in the morning sun, is one of the great mountain moments of one's life. At this spot one can fairly say that one has climbed Kili, and David adopts this as a reasonable point of view. Somehow I summon the energy to continue with Simon along the crater rim to Uhuru Peak — easy going in fact under the good conditions prevailing, with constant stupendous views of the glacier scenery and its bizarre formations so different from those of the Alps. The top itself is just a bump in the ridge, with tattered flags, a summit book and a tablet to commemorate Independence Day — insignificant as a peak, but when you suddenly realise that you've walked up to 19,340 ft. the sense of achievement is strong.

A cold wind springs up and we hurry back. I notice that my lungs are working overtime, and knees begin to buckle a bit. But ploughing down the scree goes well, and at mid-day we're back at the Kibo hut. Crowds are expected, so no lazing about and we continue across the Saddle and down to Horombo. A 16-hour day and, though the hut is very full that night, we sleep well.

11 Aug. To Mandara for lunch. Many people are coming up the path, in miscellaneous attire, wondering no doubt how far they will go. Below Mandara we choose a narrow track leading through the thick of the forest. Marvellous scenery, with waterfalls and flowering shrubs; monkeys screech in the trees but remain hidden. David has gone ahead and we hope that he will not miss the way: getting lost in this forest is no joke. I look at Simon's shoes and tell him that I shall send him some used gear from England — clearly marked "second-hand" so that he will not have to pay customs. Back at Park Gate we are handed our certificates to prove to the world that we have climbed the mountain, and we drive back to the hotel where we distribute tips and take our leave of the cheerful gang who have looked after our needs so obligingly and well.

THE ADAMELLO AND THE PRESANELLA

Memories of an excursion in the Italian Alps

Charles Warren

If some of the pleasantest moments of my life have been those I have spent climbing mountains, I attribute this mainly to my sense of the romantic in mountaineering. I am still ambitious, and retain a feeling that no alpine season is completely satisfactory unless one has accomplished at least one *grand course* in the classical sense. And yet I can still return happily from a mountaineering holiday having traversed only traditional ground. It is the unexpected, whether this presents in the form of an exciting situation or simply as a heightened emotional experience, which really counts. One of the most rewarding days I have ever had in the hills was a solitary walk round the head of the Falzturmtal, in the rain, during a frustrating holiday at Pertisau.

The romantic, with a feeling for tradition, enjoys the advantage of a heightened appreciation of his surroundings. It is this, combined perhaps with a liking for alpine literature, art and natural history which makes almost any excursion into the mountains a matter of the greatest pleasure for me.

But now I want to talk about that strange region in Italy, which lies to the south of the main alpine chain, with its isolated glaciated plateau from the rim of which spring three snowy peaks — the Adamello, the Presanella and the Carre Alto. All of these, by their ordinary routes, are easy mountains to ascend and can safely be climbed without even putting on a rope. In fine weather it is ideal country for solitary climbing. Yet how rewarding a visit to this district can be.

Although much has changed since Freshfield wrote 'Italian Alps' in 1875, there is a passage in that book which almost holds true today: 'To most English frequenters of the Swiss Alps the Lombard snow-peaks are known but as spots on the horizon of the extended view of some mountain top'. It was this book which caught my imagination and set me dreaming about delectable mountains, so I cannot resist quoting from it once again an evocative passage in which he describes the distant view of these mountains from Monte Rosa. 'The full midday glow of a July sun was falling from the dark vapourless vault overhead on to the topmost crags of Monte Rosa — round us on three sides the thousand crested Alps swept in a vast semicircle of snow and ice, clustering in bright companies or ranging their snowy heads in sun tipped lines against the horizon. But we turned our faces mostly to the south, where, beyond the foreshortened foothills, and as it seemed at little more than a stone's throw distance, lay the broad plains of Piedmont and Lombardy — where and what we asked, are these 'silver spearheads'?

The first time I saw these mountains at close quarters was when crossing the Tonale pass in 1954. In the early hours of a fine morning the northern precipices of the Presanella were a splendid sight, and we were reminded of Freshfield and his enterprising first ascent from this direction. A year or so later I had an opportunity of looking at the western cliffs of the Adamello as we crossed the Aprica pass and wound our way down to the lovely little Italian town of Edolo. Then a few years later I took a party up to the Rifugio Garibaldi with the idea of crossing the range and walking down the romantic Val di Genova to Pinzolo. But after a late arrival at the hut in mist, and a brief early morning glimpse of the impressive western cliffs of the Adamello through the clouds, our plan was thwarted by bad weather and we had to beat a retreat. But I had seen enough to fill me with curiosity and a wish to return to those parts.

In 1961 circumstances set a limit to the time and extent of our alpine holiday. With only ten days at our disposal during the month of September, we decided that our best chance of striking good weather would be to make for the Italian Alps. An obvious choice was the Dolomites.

But in case of good weather we wanted to be within access of snow mountains. The first plan was to go to the Ortler. But one of us had already spent a season in that group, so eventually it was decided that we should meet at Bolzano, make our base Pinzolo, and from there climb either in the Adamello group or else in the Brenta Dolomites, depending upon the state of the weather when we got there.

The nearest rail head to Pinzolo is Trento, and from there it is but an hour's drive to one's destination. This important industrial town holds some pleasant surprises for those who have not been there before if they can spare an hour or two to explore its older parts. They should certainly make for the Piazza Cesori Battisti, which formerly, and more appropriately, was called the Piazza del Duomo, to see the old Romanesque cathedral and admire the splendid Neptune fountain which adorns this ancient square. On a hot day it is pleasant to sit at a table under the arcades and watch the cool play of water in the fountain as the world passes by.

The village of Pinzolo, near the head of the Val Rendena, with its Baroque church, tall campanile and clusters of old houses, is probably the pleasantest as well as the most convenient centre from which to make an excursion into the Adamello-Presanella group. Unlike the lovely sounding but disappointing Madonna di Campiglio which lies a few miles further up the valley it remains relatively unspoilt by the tourist industry and has managed to retain something of its original character and charm. Certainly in the month of September, if not at other times, one can still catch something of Freshfield's feelings for the place when he wrote: 'It would be hard to find a more delightful spot in which to idle away a sunny day than the hillside immediately behind Pinzolo. It is only needful to climb a few hundred yards among the chestnut boles to find platforms covered with a soft carpet of moss, ferns and delicate southern flowers. Here under the shade of dancing leaves, fanned by soft breezes and lulled by the cool tinkle of falling water and the murmur of innumerable living things which fills an Italian noon, the restless traveller may for once enjoy unmixed with other thoughts the sympathetic delight of coexistence with a world seemingly for the moment wholly given up to enjoyment'. But times have changed, and it should be emphasised that such delights can only be experienced these days if the Italian holiday season is avoided. Within the next few years they may well be gone beyond recall.

Here then at Pinzolo we installed ourselves in the excellent little Hotel Vidi. But the weather was fine and we had to make the most of it, so there was no time for lingering in the valley. After a comfortable night at the hotel we set out for the Rifugio Mandrone on our way to the Adamello.

The Bedole Alp, at the head of the Val di Genova, can be reached quite easily nowadays by road and this has rather spoilt the valley; but even so it remains a wild and splendid place. The road is still a rough one which winds its way upwards alongside the Sarca torrent through dense forests of pine and chestnut with the walls of the valley rising precipitously on either hand. At the Bedole Alp, about nine miles up the valley, the path to the hut suddenly mounts steeply and as height is gained the walls of the valley recede and the crests of the mountains are seen for the first time. At this point two great glacier streams, those of the Mandrone and Lobbia, discharge their ice in the direction of the valley floor. Even today, with the glaciers shrunken to a fraction of their former size, the head of the Val di Genova is still a splendid place. From the engravings in Freshfield's book it is still possible to imagine the grandeur of the scene when he saw it with the glaciers extending almost to the floor of the valley.

On arrival at the hut, after a short but steep climb, we found we had the place almost to ourselves. Clearly the climbing season in these parts was considered to be over because the guardian was preparing to shut the place up and retire to the valley. When climbing here then, it is as well to remember that the season ends in mid-September.

Soon after dawn the following day we started for the Adamello. At first we made our way upwards towards the left lateral moraine of the Mandrone glacier and in doing so

were able to observe at closer quarters the extraordinary extent to which the glacier had withdrawn of recent years. Then after a brief pause on the last boulders of the moraine, during which we examined the Presanella and worked out a route to its summit we 'entered upon the ice'.

The vast expanses of the Vedretta del Mandrone and the Pian di Neve are almost unbroken by crevasses, so we advanced without putting on a rope. At first our route lay in a south-westerly direction, leaving the Passo Brizio away on our right; then it bore to the west, leading us up steepening slopes under a southern shoulder of the Corno Bianco. Thus the upper basin of the snow-field was attained without difficulty and finally its western rim. From there a short climb up the easy rocks and snow of the south-west ridge of the Adamello brought us quickly on to its summit.

It was one of those perfect days in mid-September with hardly a cloud in the sky and only the lightest of summit breezes to keep the air pleasantly cool. To the north the ground fell away steeply at our feet. In the far distance, across the intervening brown-green valleys and foothills, stood the silver crests of the Bernina and Ortler summits in splendid isolation; and far away in the north west the sharp point of the Matterhorn could clearly be seen. In the words of Freshfield: 'Surely no one who has enjoyed such a view would deny the beauty of the forms and colours gathered round him'.

Reluctantly we turned from our enjoyment of this scene and started to descend. This time we followed the north-east crest, pausing from time to time to gaze at the magnificent northern precipices of our mountain. In the guide book a number of routes up this face are described; but the one which attracted us most of all was the north-west rib, here seen in profile.

To complete the day we followed the ridge to the Corno Bianco before finally leaving it to return to the Mandrone glacier. During the long walk back down the glacier we realised how far we had come because the light was already beginning to fade by the time we got back to the hut.

We had no guide book to the Presanella for our excursion the following day, but I had read Freshfield's account of his first ascent. With this in mind, and with the aid of the excellent 1:50,000 scale map of the district, obtainable almost anywhere, there should be no difficulty in finding the way up the mountain. We noticed that a path was marked on the map which seemed to contour the hillside slightly below the level of the Mandrone hut in the direction of the Val di Cermen, whence it rose steeply to the pass of that name. On our way up to the Adamello we had paused repeatedly to inspect the Presanella, had identified this pass and thence traced the route to the summit over Freshfield's col.

It is a long way from the Mandrone hut to the Presanella, so we decided to leave before dawn the following day. After contouring the hillside for about an hour in the dark without difficulty, the going became more difficult. As it got lighter, this high level track began to involve us in a series of ups and downs to avoid the numerous rocky bluffs which impeded our passage, and in several places the path became tenuous and distinctly precipitous. Meanwhile the views into the Val di Genova and across it to its southern retaining walls, and to the Carre Alto beyond, became more and more impressive. From the point of view of general interest I can recommend this line of approach to the Presanella. After an hour or two of interesting going we rounded the last rocky bluff, entered the Val di Cermen and examined with feelings of dismay the steep scree slopes ahead of us. Before mounting towards the col we came across a cave under a large rock in which there were unmistakable traces of recent occupation. Then after a brief pause we set our teeth and started the stiff climb up old moraine heaps towards the Col di Cermen. Although exceedingly steep the going was better than we expected and we quickly gained height. The monotony of the ascent was enlivened by the antics of a family of chamois who inhabited this desolate corrie. At the top of the moraine we reached the base of an ice slope and stopped for breakfast. Although this

slope was not steep, we put on crampons to save ourselves the labour of cutting steps. Then we stamped our way up to the Passo di Cercen. The pass is on the northern retaining wall of the Val di Genova between the Monte Cercen and the Monte Gabbiol on the south and the Cima di Vermiglio on the north. On the way to Freshfield's col we exchanged greetings with a solitary Austrian climber whom we had met in the hut two days before. Then after crossing one or two small crevasses on our way up the moderately steep slopes, we attained the col. A short descent on the other side was followed by a traverse across an easy snow slope towards the west ridge of our mountain. This ridge was quickly gained and after a short scramble along it, during which we enjoyed some magnificent views down the northern precipices of the mountain, we made a final traverse across an ice slope followed by a scramble up some easy rocks on to the summit.

Once again the weather had been perfect, so although the climb had been entirely devoid of technical difficulties it had been a rewarding experience. The grandeur of our surroundings at every stage of our long approach to the summit still lingers in the memory. The picture we had formed in our mind's eye from studying the map was vividly brought to life by the view from the Presanella. Westwards we could look back to the scene of our previous days' excursion and, for the second time, fully appreciate the height and extent of the central snow fields of the Adamello. Whilst to the east we saw ahead of us the red-grey walls of the Brenta rock peaks, much reduced in stature because of our own altitude.

But time was passing, and eventually a cool breeze began to make us ready for the descent. We had no need to retrace our steps like Freshfield to collect baggage, so made off towards the Nardis glacier which we descended, in a long series of glissades in a direct line to Pinzolo. Then having left the glacier without much difficulty by its left bank, we quickly gained the upper pastures of the Nardis alp before plunging steeply down through the forests towards the torrent of the Sarca in the Val di Genova.

It was autumn and the colour of the leaves on a great variety of trees was already beginning to change, and they had started to fall. Our feet fell silently on the soft carpet of fallen leaves as we made the steep descent in the gathering dusk. The only sound was that of rushing water in this land of forests and water falls. There was a solemn grandeur about the manner of our return to the valley which seemed a fitting climax to a long and perfect day in the hills.

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I'LL TELL YOU THE TALE OF A YETI

By John White*

The sun mercilessly beat down from a cloudless sky. Immersed in my own thoughts I trudged doggedly on, up, up, and up the steep path. Little trickles of perspiration irritated as they ran down my face, and my shirt clung to my back as the dampness penetrated. How prudent I had been to bring cotton shirts and not nylon. That bit of pre-planning at least I had got right, but what about all the other things? Were the rations brought from England adequate, did we have sufficient rope, would the Scotch last out? The path ascended remorselessly, 1,000ft., 2,000ft., 3,000ft.; perhaps it went on forever? So this was the Himalayas at last. All the months of planning and preparation were now behind and with creaking knees and flabby muscles one was at last face to face with reality. Ahead there stretched a line of porters, backs bowed under their Nepalese baskets each with his 65lb load, whose weight had been critically assessed by their shop steward, the Nike. Little wiry men, clad in little more than rags and mostly bare foot on the rocky path, how did they support that massive load solely from that forehead round their forehead? Perhaps I should carry my rucksack suspended from my forehead — would it feel any lighter? But soon the first illusion was shattered. Whereas I had imagined from the comfort of my English home that Nepalese porters were tough supermen who would carry these fearsome loads all day without a murmur, I soon found that they were affected, as I was, by the steepness of the path and the heat of the day. Far from trudging remorselessly on for hours on end, they sought every opportunity to stop and take the weight off their headbands; fifteen minutes was a good stint between resting points. In a strange way this gave me encouragement for I did not need to stop with my 20lb load as frequently as they did with their 65lb. After a couple of hours the path started to enter slightly wooded ground, although continuing upwards still, and there was blessed relief from the torment of the sun.

To be actually on the move, on the trail rising out of Lamasangu, was the culmination of 11 months of planning which had started in November 1978 when I first canvassed a few friends about the possibility of joining me in a small and modest expedition to the Himalayas. My proposal was a party of four, going into a remote area which offered the opportunity to travel amongst very big mountains with spectacular scenery and possibility of climbing a peak or two. If a virgin peak were within our grasp that would be an added bonus. This prospectus resulted in bringing together John Brooks, a solicitor from Blackpool, John Edwards an RAF officer with several expeditions behind him including a fine first ascent on Ruwenzori, and John Allan a young surgeon from somewhere or other. We never really did succeed in tying down his whereabouts for long either before the departure, or very frequently, on the expedition itself. Four Johns of course presented an immediate problem of nomenclature which seemed to resolve itself without executive action on my part by a process which was as obscure as it was satisfactory. We became, respectively, JS, JB, Squire and Doc. Our sherpas of course had other ideas. For them we became Burra Sahib, JB Sahib, Dr Sahib and I never discovered the truth about Edwards.

Discussion with Ken Pearson, Herbert Hartley and Ted Courtenay, and researches in the Alpine Club Library led to my proposing to my prospective companions that we should go to Nepal, walk from Lamasangu to Lukla in the Dudh Khosi, and from there cross the ridge on the east side of the valley to enter the Hinku. Once in the Hinku we would go to the head of the valley with a dual objective. One was to climb Mera, 21,700ft, and the other was to explore the cirque of peaks at the head of the Hinku Nup glacier. Jim Milledge, who had been on the Silver Hut expedition in 1960, had been partway up this glacier during a foray from the Silver Hut before the party set off for their ill-fated attempt on Makalu, and conversations with him whetted my appetite to see this wild region. My companions readily accepted my proposals since as invitees they were in no position to argue, and so it was decided.

There was of course the little detailed problem of ensuring that Squire got adequate leave of absence from the defence of the United Kingdom. He felt that his application might find more favour with the RAF if there was a scientific objective for the expedition; it would never do if the Press or the House of Commons got the idea that the object of the exercise was merely to enjoy ourselves. So we duly volunteered our services to the Natural History Department of the British Museum who accepted our offer with alacrity. They recruited us to collect samples for them in the Hinku, which they said was of interest to them because they were always on the look-out for people going to remote and uninhabited areas that might produce previously unknown species. None of us were botanists but this caused no concern since surely a half-day course at the British Museum would tell us all we needed to know, and the prospect of immortality in the botanical world by collecting an array of hitherto unknown plants was alluring. Alas, this expectation was short-lived. It seems that their Book of Knowledge on plants is already complete, but pleasewould we collect some spiders from high altitude. This change in our fortunes, had however, surprising results. It seems that the great British public is much more interested in spiders than in gentians, and a day or two before our departure to Nepal our spiders became headline news in the Press and radio. This subsequently prompted Basil Boothroyd to write a very entertaining article in Punch about the expedition, so our immortality was achieved by a different route.

We collected our sirdar Lakpa Tsering one high altitude sherpa Pinjo Tensing, the cook and cookboy in Kathmandu. After driving 50 miles down the China Road to Lamasangu we started the 12 day walk to Lukla in the Dudh Khosi. As we toiled up the first hillside from Lamasangu our party had grown to 24 by the addition of 16 porters to our permanent camp staff. We travelled eastwards through a smiling land which still held some surprises for me despite all that one had read about the approach marches of one's predecessors. The intensity of the cultivation on many of the hillsides, terraced in tiny strips on a hillside soaring up into the sky each filled with rice paddy. The extent of the afforestation in many of the valleys, and the size of the rhododendron trees. The delightful variety of dragon flies with their bodies of ochre brown, black and peacock blue. The thrill of seeing for the first time a butterfly with a wing span of four inches, and the iridescent velvet black and mauve of other butterflies. As day followed day these pleasures of nature took one's mind off the little discomforts that were discernible in calf muscles and knee joints.

Travelling due east across Nepal one is moving across the grain of the country so progress was a succession of climbs to a ridge, a long plunge down into the next valley, cross the river, climb the next ridge only to repeat the process. But the rewards of each ascent came with the views to the north — the Jugal Himal, Gauri Shankar and then the Hinku peaks and our first distant view of Mera itself. These twelve days of arduous delight were enlivened by Edwards teaching the porters the Welsh rugby wacry, so we introduced yet another facet of western culture to a tolerant people, and porters vied with each other to see over what distance their cries of Ogee Ogee Ogee, Aye Aye Aye, would carry to their companions.

Arriving at Lukla, we paid off our 16 lowland porters and set about engaging a similar number of local men to carry for us into the Hinku. As we were preparing to leave Lukla the cook, who had been wearing shorts until then, chose this moment to announce that he had no breeches. The next hour was a harrowing experience. With a sniff of money in the air, porters and sherpas alike suddenly discovered they had no gloves, no pullovers, their boots would never last, and indeed one wondered how many members of their families they were seeking to refit at our expense. As neither Austin Reed or Robert Lawrie have branches in Lukla, all we managed to do for the cook was to buy him a pair of longjohns, so as we trudged out of the village up the hillside I was able to entertain myself with the forthcoming prospect of seeing the cook decked out in longjohns and shorts. Mysteriously, it never happened. As soon as we reached the snowline the ever resourceful cook had another good look in his rucksack and behold, there were his breeches after all.

The Hinku valley runs north and south, parallel to, but east of, the Dudh Khosi. To get from Lukla into the Hinku it is necessary to cross the dividing ridge whose general level is about 19-20,000ft, peaking here and there to 21 and 22,000ft. We were aiming at a narrow notch, the Zatrwala pass, at 15,000ft. The poor weather that we had been experiencing on our approach march resulted in this ridge presenting a daunting aspect from the Dudh Khosi, well covered in new snow. Of itself this was no great problem, but we were told that a German party had failed to cross the week before and we knew that Ken Pearson had also been unable to persuade his porters to cross it in 1977. So this was to be our first moment of truth. From a camp above Lukla at 11,000ft we set off upwards, first through residual rhododendron forests and later across open hillsides and boulder fields. When we reached the snowline it was crisp, and a couple of blows with the adze sufficed to make adequate steps for the porters. When we reached some 13,000ft the snow suddenly changed in consistency to deep castor sugar which would not compact and up which we struggled and floundered. The sherpas went well but the Rai porters had no stomach for these conditions and fairly soon they sat down and there was mutinous talk in the ranks. Honeyed words of encouragement did not move them. Appeals to their manlihood similarly failed. Even the offer of double pay to every man who got his load to the ridge was inadequate inducement to persuade them to continue through this purgatory. By this time a freezing mist had closed in to add to the general feeling of misery written plainly on their faces, and several roundly asserted that to continue meant certain death. Finally however, a near miraculous act of persuasion by Lakpa, which I subsequently discovered centred around a complicated dissertation concerning the law of contract and the possibility of prison for those in breach of it, got the porters moving and after a long struggle we coaxed, pushed and pulled every porter and his load up the final steep slope onto the col. In a narrow cwm a thousand feet down the other side we gratefully got the tents up and settled down to an extremely cold night with snow gently falling.

We awoke next morning to find an azure sky above and a valley at our feet filled with forest, falling away to the south into a deep gorge with light mist sending its probing fingers through the trees, and a veritable archipelago of mountain islands thrusting upwards through the nebelmeer to the east. A long slanting traverse brought us down 4,000ft to the river and three more days of march brought us to our base camp at a spot known as Dig Kharka at 15,000ft, amongst the most magnificent scenery imaginable. Our campsite was dominated by a soaring 22,000ft. 'Matterhorn' known only as peak 43, flanked on its left by Kussum Kanguru, and across the valley from us the complex soaring crags and hanging glaciers of Mera itself. The north summit of Kussum Kanguru had been reached for the first time by Doug Scott just four weeks earlier, and the higher south summit was climbed for the first time by a Japanese party two or three weeks later, but these were events of which we were to hear only after our return.

Day 16 out of Kathmandu without a halt, and the geriatric leader announced that he had earned a rest day. So whilst I busied myself sorting out stores and generally organising the base camp against a prolonged occupation, the two youngest members of the party were despatched off in the direction of the Mera glacier to reconnoitre the way to it, and find a suitable access point. They returned in the late afternoon very excited. In a boulder-strewn hollow at about 17,000ft they had found a snow patch with large animal foot prints in it. Whilst in the vicinity of the footprints, they had both heard nearby, two loud, piercing, shrill cries of an animal and their descriptions of these cries precisely matched the description that Lakpa, unknown to my companions, had given to me a week before when telling me about the Yeti. Next morning I set off to the spot with Pinjo Tensing, laden with photographic equipment and copious supplies of film. Sure enough, there were four extremely clearly marked footprints with a row of prominent toes, and apparently of two separate animals one much smaller than the other. Pinjo announced with total conviction that these were Yeti footprints and that this would be a bad place to be in the dark. I was conscious of the unique nature of this discovery since, so far as I knew, nobody had ever before seen the footprints of the young as well as the mature animal. A careful search of other patches of snow on the

hillside revealed further footprints which were duly photographed. Although the original set had clearly been made a matter of hours before, many of the other footprints were equally obviously much older, and measurements disposed of the old theory that the size of the footprints increased greatly as they melted. Interestingly, they were quite unlike the footprints photographed by Don Whillans in the Annapurna Sanctuary, although very like the single footprint photographed by Michael Ward and Eric Shipton in 1953.

The photography being over we returned to the serious business of mountaineering. A fine walk up the Hinku Nup glacier brought us to the basin at its head. A tiny platform made by scraping the crest off a huge moraine provided us with space for three tents and the most magnificent prospect on every hand that one could imagine. Two members of the party celebrated this situation by climbing a peak of 19,700ft which showed every sign of previously being virgin. It was not, however, uninhabited. Turning over a stone on the summit two spiders were found and ritually collected to discharge our obligations to the naturalists.

The modest peak that had been climbed was the only one sufficiently accessible to be within the resources we had at our disposal, so the views on every hand having been dutifully recorded we returned to our base camp. And what views they were. A ridge some 18 miles long averaging 20,000ft with unnamed and unclimbed tops every half mile. A cluster of fine 21,000ft peaks to the north embraced by the two arms of the Hinku glacier, and the 22,000ft Kantega to the west standing proudly above it all whose only vulnerable point lay up an icefall approaching the scale of that leading to Everest's Western Cwm. So now we turned our attention to Mera.

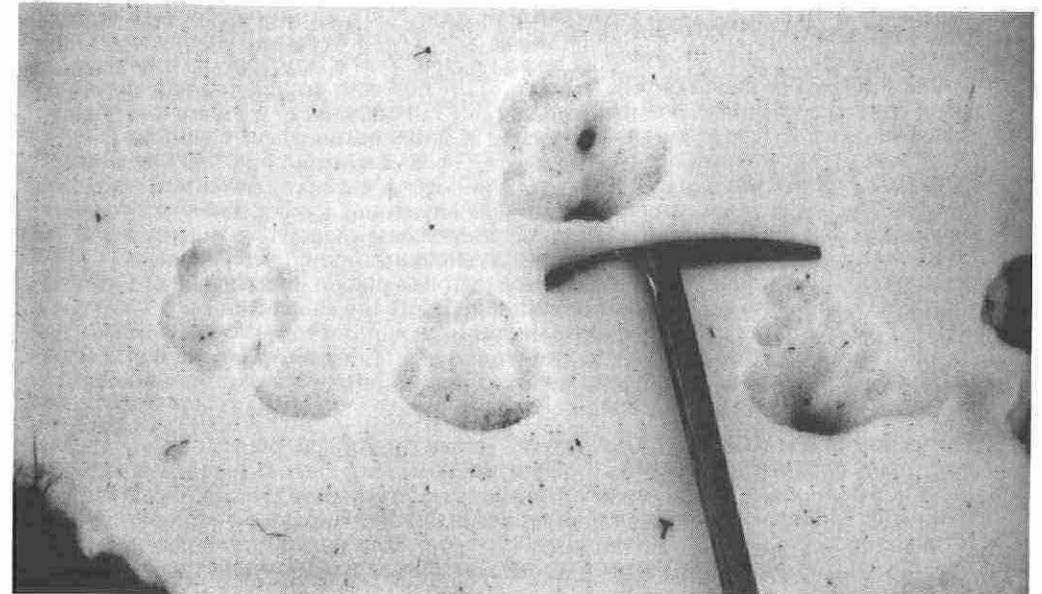
Whilst one party set out to climb Mera whose summit they reached in very high winds on 16 November, I went with three sherpas over the Mera La and put a camp just a couple of hundred feet below it on the Hongu side. From here I scrambled up a small rock peak on the north side of the La in the expectation of having an uninterrupted view of Lhotse and Everest to the north. Alas, I was disappointed. The view to the north was blocked by a much smaller nearer peak which, whilst handsome, boasted neither name nor fame. The little peak on which I was standing, just about 19,000ft, also showed every sign of being virgin, judging by the evidence of the precarious disposition of the rubbish of which it was formed. To the north-east the sky was filled with the magnificent bulk of Baruntse, and further away and slightly to its left was a fine view of Makalu. To the south-east lay the splendid form of Chamlang (24,000ft), a sort of Grandes Jorasses on the grand scale and the Hongu valley at its foot filled with cloud. Below me lay the gleaming ice slope down from the La and the little rock island upon which were perched our two tiny, lonely tents. They were on a ledge some 6ft wide and 20ft long perched above the ice which plunged steeply down for 500ft to a level portion of the glacier. The sherpas, contemplating the precariousness of our location, decided to lash the two tents together with the climbing rope, taking a belay around the whole rock island on which they were placed. Soon after dark the wisdom of this precaution was borne in upon me when a violent catabatic wind came rolling down from Mera threatening to tear our tents from their moorings. The gusts grew in violence until the A pole at one end of my tent collapsed and the canvas flapped noisily in my face. My immediate reaction was to jump out and go somewhere else. Before putting this plan into action however, I paused to ask myself 'where?' I could think of no satisfactory answer to this question, for logic suggested that the most probable result of leaving the tent in the dark would be that I would step over the edge of my ledge and make a rapid and unceremonious descent to the foot of the glacier. This clearly would have several disadvantages: if I didn't break my neck I should at least spend an extremely cold night and be faced with the prospect of reascending 500ft of ice in the morning to get back to where I started. The more I considered, the more this plan seemed unattractive so I adopted the alternative of taking a couple of Mogadon. This proved to be the right formula because I awoke to a beautiful crystal clear morning, with neither wind nor cloud in the sky, wrapped comfortably in the remains of the tent.

As we marched out of the Hinku some days later, descending into the rain forest, swirling mists came down and engulfed us and the trees on every hand. Every branch hanging with creepers and lichen, fallen trunks in wild profusion coated with the moss of years, forcing us to climb over, under and round the wild confusion of the undergrowth. We camped for the night in a tiny clearing with the trees around us soaring into the impenetrable mist whose cold clammy fingers crept through the bushes towards us, and our shadows from the camp fires became giants dancing on the walls of mist. Inevitably Tolkien came to mind. Surely these were the woods of Loth Lorien. Would the Orcs attack us during the night? Were Gandolf and Aragorn nearby to come to our aid? As one drifted into sleep one wondered where the dividing line between the real world and the fantasy world was — but why should one suppose that there is a dividing line? The dawn brought brilliant sun filtering down through the dense trees above; gone were the Orcs, nor was there any sign of Gandolf and the Lady Galadriel. In their place was the very real task of trudging up 4,000ft of hillside to regain the Zatrwala Pass and, crossing it, to descend towards Lukla, the inhabited world, the realities of an in-tray and the discipline of an appointments diary.

Epilogue

And what about the Yeti? An astute newspaper reporter, anxious for news of spiders, spotted our return and found my Yetis to be much a more newsworthy story. What better material to put out on Christmas Eve than a good mystery story associated with the regions of snow and ice. The television, and radio and press worldwide entered into the fray with enthusiasm. Eager beaver reporters tracked down a Canadian party in Toronto whom we had met in the Hinku to ask them for their opinion, and sages exchanged correspondence in the Times. What is a Yeti? Is there a Yeti? Do I believe in Yetis? Who knows and who cares. The story and the picture are still going around the world, but what I have is the memory of a wonderful trip.

*This article is reproduced from the Rucksack Club Journal by kind permission of the Editor.



Footprints of the Yeti? Photo: J.S. Whyte

DE GUSTIBUS

Frank Solari

A pursuit of mountaineering can yield experiences quite incidental to the business of ascending or descending this or that peak, pass or glacier – experiences that may be uplifting or depressing, thought-provoking or diverting. With any luck 48 years of going into high places ought to furnish any number of such incidents with which to regale or bore one's friends and acquaintances or from which to draw for an article for the Journal.

Take eating, for instance. A well-worn subject you may think, from interludes in the course of first ascents by the pioneers to voluminous appendices in many a book-of-the-expedition. And who would wish to waste further paper and ink on soggy sandwiches consumed in the lee of a summit cairn or Pennine wall, or at the other extreme on the delicacies on offer at Hanselmann's or the Pâtisserie des Alpes? But maybe a few culinary/gastronomic experiences enjoyed or suffered will stand an airing.

Very early in my climbing career I attended a meet at Robertson Lamb Hut in distinguished company (I hasten to add that H.P.S. was not of their number). The leader ordained one day that the main course at dinner that evening would be macaroni cheese for which he had provisioned the ingredients. The macaroni was broken to a size to accompany the cheese in the available dish which was put in an oven which sat precariously on a feeble paraffin-burning stove. Inspections at half-hourly intervals revealed some softening of the cheese but none at all of the macaroni, and after some three hours public opinion compelled the cook to abandon all pretence and we retreated to Ambleside for a belated supper. This and similar episodes taught me two of my early lessons – that a man's distinction as a mountaineer was no guarantee of his competence as a cook, and that if my fastidious appetite was to be agreeably satisfied I had better learn to cook for myself.

Another early lesson, nay, several lessons were learnt the hard way at the Youth Hostel in Glen Nevis. By then I was working in London, but had arranged to join some of my Manchester friends at the hostel for the New Year. With a co-driver I was to drive up in my M.G. Midget to arrive in Glen Nevis on New Year's Eve, the Manchester contingent walking over from Kinlochleven on New Year's Day, and the organiser had informed me that he had asked the Warden of the hostel to provide food for the whole party. The drive was tough due to a considerable fall of snow, so we were weary and chilled when we arrived at Fort William after 26 hours at the wheel. Convinced (erroneously) that we must not be seen driving up to the hostel, I parked the car at a garage and emptied the radiator before we shouldered our heavy packs and trudged up the glen. The hostel as we entered was "cold as any stone" having had no visitor for some weeks, but the thought of a hot meal cheered us. However, we quickly found that (a) the warden did not feed hostellers and (b) he did not reply to letters unless accompanied by stamped addressed envelopes. It dawned on us that we had a very short time in which to get back to Fort William before the shops shut for several days, and that we had to get provisions for many more than ourselves. We made it, just, but the third plod along that road was too much of a good thing and we were too fatigued to cook ourselves a meal so we spent a very cold night, unaware that we were really starving in both senses.

The fortune of war took me to USA where I joined the Appalachian Mountain Club and made many good friends. In 1945 I took part in a camping meet at the foot of Traveller Mountain in Maine, which involved a train journey on the Bangor and Aroostook Railroad to Millinocket, a drive of many miles in a large truck along a lumbering road through the forest, a march of several miles over an abandoned lumbering road with a magnificent four-horse tote-waggon to carry our baggage and supplies, and finally a

lengthy paddle by canoe down two lakes with a portage between them to as isolated and elegant a camp-site as one could wish for. Here, at the lake shore, we set up camp for a week to explore the extensive and sprawling monadnock that is Traveller Mountain. Our leader was a very experienced mountaineer and backwoodsman so we ate very well in quality as in quantity; the weather was superb; and life was good. How good we were to find out on our third day when a floatplane dropped in on our lake to deliver a fresh supply of steaks and peaches.

Twelve years later I was able to combine pleasure with business when a visit to Ottawa inspired the idea of taking some leave in the Canadian Rockies. My wife was able to join me at the right time and with the infinitely kindly help of Robert Hind, an A.C. member living in Calgary, we found ourselves towards the end of June at the foot of Assiniboine, camping with Elizabeth Rummel. To be able to get in to Assiniboine so early in the season was unusual and we were the first visitors to arrive that year. Elizabeth had only just set up camp for the season and had not expected anyone for a week or two, so the thoughtful man who provided our saddle- and pack-horses for the long ride in to Sunburst Lake took the precaution of adding a fair-sized hunk of beef to our loads to make sure that we had enough to eat when we got there. As it happened the extra meat was not needed as the camp was well stocked, but we made a meal off a corner of the hunk and the rest was put outside in a meat-safe overnight. Next morning it was all gone, and bear tracks revealed the identity of the thief. A forest ranger doing his rounds turned up a day or so later and was concerned that a hungry bear should be so near the camp. He baited the meat-safe with some fish he had caught and sat up all night with a loaded gun, but bruin had the sense to clear out and wasn't to be seen.

1967 was the 20th anniversary of our honeymoon visit to the Wind River Range in Wyoming, to be celebrated by a return visit. I understand that modern geologists agree with Isaiah who, long ago, told in the Authorised Version that "Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low", but our experience suggests that the process had been reversed during the 20 years since 1947 since the valleys were indisputably deeper and the mountains much higher than they had been. So that when we set out to traverse the oddly-named Horse Ridge high above camp in the Dinwoody Canyon it took much longer and the descent in the failing light of evening was more troublesome than we had bargained for. We reached camp only just before the short twilight expired, weary and hungry, to find that our companions had been fishing, had an immense catch of cut-throat trout, and had the fire in perfect condition. Never was trout finer or more superbly cooked, and we gorged ourselves into euphoria. I gather from one well qualified to judge that the Meursault, cooled in a nearby snow patch, was the perfect accompaniment.

For sheer earthly bliss what can compare with the sound of a Sherpa intoning Om Mani Padme Hum while pumping up the Primus for breakfast as one lies in one's sleeping bag secure in the knowledge that any offer to lift a hand would be regarded as a reflection on the Sherpa's competence and that all one had to do for the next half-hour or so was to await a succession of dishes passed into the tent with the utmost courtesy? However, even such blissful interludes may be interrupted – one morning when Hamish McArthur and I and our two delightful Sherpas Ourkien and Numbe were well up the glacier that was to lead us to our first (and only) twentythousander, Hamish had the misfortune to spill some of his porridge on to his sleeping bag. His call for a towel to mop up the mess led to some confusion as neither Ourkien nor Numbe could understand English and they thought that the call was for the next course to be served, so we had a rapid succession of bacon, fried egg, toast, marmalade and coffee before we got it sorted out.

That year we had left Manali for Lahul with a string of ponies to carry our gear and supplies which included a wicker hamper with four dozen eggs carefully packed in hay. In due course the inevitable breakages left us with a residue of whole eggs, the number of which was not divisible by the number of sahibs and mem-sahibs in the party. It was my wife's inspiration to avert the issue of who was to go without an egg for breakfast

by suggesting that we had pancakes one evening — possibly prompted by her exaggerated opinion of my skill at tossing them. So it was that Ourkien, our cook, was informed by our interpreter that I should cook the “pooding” and he made room for me in his cook tent. Now that tent had been a snug fit for Ourkien who barely came up to my shoulder and his stoves and pots, but it provided cramped quarters for my bulk and no head-room at all in which to toss a pancake. My solution was to turn round so that I could reach outside the tent for the tossing but Ourkien was not to know this as he watched carefully all that I did so that he would learn how to cook pancakes in future. As I turned and thrust the frying pan outside the tent his face registered extreme dismay — clearly something had gone very wrong — which turned to delight as I returned the pan with a perfectly-turned pancake to the Primus. So far, good, but whereas I had Ourkien for sole spectator to this first essay, for the remaining five pancakes I was closely watched by both Sherpas, four Ladakhi porters, and an uncertain number of pony-wallahs which I found rather off-putting, and as usual only my first toss was a good clean one. Next morning we were intrigued to see the Sherpas and Ladakhis tossing their chuppattis instead of turning them with their fingers.

Kashmir, 200 miles to the north west, looked after us very well — so well that we were never allowed to miss a hot lunch, no matter what the going. One day, after a long haul up from near Sonamarg in the Sind valley towards the Nichinai Pass, we pitched camp at something over 13,000 feet and in due course the table was set up for afternoon tea — table-cloth laid, cups, saucers, plates and finally the samovar of tea — but no freshly-baked cakes and buns appeared as we had come to expect. After a reasonably polite interval we were about to ask what had happened to the service when Yussuf, our sirdar, and Sultana (yes!) our cook, emerged bearing a splendid cake which they had been icing elaborately and appropriately in honour of Harry Whitehouse’s 72nd birthday which it was.

To come nearer home, one of our happiest Alpine hut memories is of the wonderfully good-humoured evening hubbub in the Capanna Marinelli when goodness knows how many Italians were enjoying their dinners and each others’ company and even had something to spare for four foreigners who were paying what to them was the compliment of visiting their mountains, with dramatic warnings of the “molto crepacci” that lay in wait for us on our way to the Altipiano di Fellaria and Piz Palu next morning. For sheer volume of cheerful din at meal times, Greeks are in the same division as Italians to judge from our experience as guests of the Hellenic Alpine Club at the celebrations to mark the 60th anniversary of the first ascent of Mount Olympus “by modern mortals” as they put it, when we were feasted in the Spilios Agapitos and Stavros huts with the utmost hospitality and good humour. To the Hellenes I also owe the memory of a splendid donkey-borne picnic in the Gorge of Sammaria in Crete (a gorge in a gorge, as it were) on the occasion of the UIAA Assembly at Xhania. Not to be outdone, the Georgian Mountaineering Federation also laid on a very fine picnic somewhere east of Kasbegi in the Caucasus, but the abiding recollection of that trip is of the stupendous banquets we had to endure. I lost count (and interest) somewhere around the 14th course, as I also lost count of the number of toasts we were bidden to drink, though mercifully our hosts provided water for those who could not take so much of the strong Georgian wine. One such banquet was the culmination of a day-trip by bus to one of the vineyard areas and it was totally dark before we started the long bus ride back to Tbilisi. An hour or so along the way our English-speaking guide stopped the bus and announced that he wished to introduce us to one final Georgian custom — the gentlemen were to alight and pick flowers for the ladies and the ladies were to do likewise for the gentlemen. He further suggested that the gentlemen pick their flowers at the front of the bus and that the ladies pick theirs at the rear of the bus. “You do understand what I mean, don’t you?”

One vital principle has emerged from our various travels — it is prudent at all times to have on hand some emergency rations to tide over those occasions when appetite and the wherewithal to satisfy it are out of phase. As for example on our return from

Newtonmore to Euston by the Inverness sleeper after a very happy New Year weekend spent in the sun and snow on the Cairngorms. The train was due in to Euston at 8.30 so there would be no breakfast car, and we ordered tea and biscuits to be brought in 45 minutes before arrival. I woke after a good night’s sleep to find the train at rest. My watch said that it was 8.45 and the watery light round the edge of the curtain confirmed my conclusion that we were in Euston station. Cursing the forgetful sleeping-car attendant, I scrambled out of bed and let up the curtain to look out on to a sign which spelt out the truth: “CREWE COAL SIDINGS SIGNAL BOX”. We finally fetched up at Euston around 3 p.m., sustained entirely by the supplies my provident wife had smuggled from the dinner table at our hotel.

WHO IS BRAVE ENOUGH TO FIND DON’S “HIDDEN TREASURE”

*Hamish Brown**

The great climber Harold Raeburn wrote the following about the Storr, one of the non-Cuillin hills in Skye.

“Admirers of the bizarre and eccentric in rock form find here a multitude of the most strange looking rock pinnacles in Scotland, standing up from a green slope below a fine striking wall of almost vertical rock, seamed with great chimneys of most formidable aspect.”

In case any of you are keen young climbers, before you rush off for your hundredweight of climbing gear and your car keys, be warned. The pinnacles and walls of this mountain and its teeth are all made of a sort of decayed and dried-out raisin-cake mixture.

Even Raeburn had his doubts about it. “We will not venture to assert that that Old Man will never be ascended, but we were quite content to look at him without making an attempt.”

I am sure this has been the reaction of many people since. They come, they see, they do not conquer; but, alas, nothing is sacred, and in 1955 Don Whillans made one of his raids into enemy country and climbed the Old Man, thereby proving (the hard way) that it was rotten, dangerous and difficult.

That was 57 years after Raeburn’s visit, mind you, so it held out longer than most things which have been declared difficult, dangerous or even impossible; the imbecility of one generation becoming the sober reality of the next.

A second route was put up on it just to show Don that he could not say such a thing was unlikely, and a couple of hundred yards further along the team of Bonington and Patey scaled the needle-like end of the cathedral, a crumbly wall which reminded me most of one of those walls built by children on the seashore — about two minutes before the sea finally knocks it down.

Whillans left some coins under the small cairn on top of the Old Man, which sounds very extravagant for him. Gesture, tip, bribe, whatever it was, you are welcome to go and find it — if you’re brave enough!

It is surprising how little has been written or shown in pictures about the Storr — after all, it must be unique.

The first Scottish Mountaineering Club guide book in the twenties gave it less than a page, and no pictures, even the current guide book has one photograph and little more

text, mainly being a couple of route descriptions. Storr had no real history, so such classics as B. H. Humble's "The Cuillin of Skye" naturally hardly mentioned it, though the author knew it from his very first visit to Skye.

His party then actually walked more or less round Skye, taking in the traverse of the Trotternish Ridge (some of it anyway, for the whole spine runs about 20 miles and gives over 7,000 feet of ascent), a traverse he spoke very highly of.

The book that did finally show it to the public was W. Poucher's "The Magic of Skye," which, if you want to pick up a copy second-hand, will set you back about £30.

It is a magnificent collection of large photographs, which is why it has become such a collector's piece. It has 10 pictures of the pinnacles, including one doublepage spread. It was certainly the memory of these pictures that sent me to see the Storr.

Like the Red Hills and some coastal walks of note, Trotternish is apt to be left either as a tailpiece or bad-weather-alternative to the main Black Cuillin, which is a pity, as the view from these other hills gains greatly by having the Cuillin in the view, rather than in the cloud.

Trotternish lies on a long arm of land running north of Portree, with the Sound of Raasay to the east and Loch Snizort to the west.

You are very conscious of the sea up there. As the long spinal ridge (it is almost a plateau in places) is close-cropped, firm grass, the walk from Storr to Quiraing is one of the great days to be had in Skye – as good as any rock climb.

That recommendation was first made by Alexander Nicolson, the earliest of the Cuillin pioneers who had Sgurr Alasdair named after him, being its first ascensionist.

Even in wet weather, the Storr might be worth the risk, for quite often the dirty weather will be dealing savagely with the Cuillin, while the long arms of the various peninsulas escape and enjoy the sunny periods beloved of the weather forecasters.

John Buchan, himself a climber who loved Skye, knew all about Skye weather. "All the winds that blow on that far and happy isle may bring rain, and most make a habit of it."

The summit of the Storr is 2,306 ft. It first comes into view as the Staffin road climbs over the peat moors above Portree. From the northern end of Loch Leathan a good path goes straight up to the "Sanctuary," with its surrounding pinnacles, the most kenspeckle being the 160 ft. Old Man.

Backing this scene is the 500 ft. basaltic main cliff, which is riven by gullies and chimneys into buttresses which are vertical or overhanging.

They have not been climbed, so, unless you want to make a first ascent, the way up involves skirting well to south or north – the latter is finer as the pinnacles are longer in view.

That is the direction I went. You can judge the view for yourself.

*This article appeared originally in a local paper. It was addressed to a readership somewhat different from the ABMSAC.



IN THE MOUNTAINS OF POLAND

A. J. C. Wilson

My work took me to Poland for the second half of September, and my Polish colleagues' preoccupation with trade-union matters gave me two weekends free to spend in the mountains. I did nothing of interest as mountaineering, but was able to engage in 'participant observation' of the PTTK (Polskie Towarzystwo Turystyczno-Krajoznawcze), a travel organization that caters chiefly for Poles rather than foreign visitors. I was told that it has the largest membership of any body in the country, exceeding that of the Communist Party, and that it was quite independent of party and government even before the recent reforms. It maintains numerous 'schroniska' in the mountains; the word is generally translated as 'mountain huts' in English and German tourist brochures, but they tend to be larger and more luxurious than the mountain huts of, say, the Swiss Alpine Club. It has several sections, each devoted to encouraging a particular form of outdoor activity. The mountain section, abbreviated GOT and appropriately pronounced 'goat', awards badges for mountain walking. Each stretch of footpath is worth so many 'points', basically one point for each horizontal kilometre and each 100m ascent, with descents counting only in the horizontal points. There are eight stages in badge collecting, each stage requiring increasing numbers of points and subject to increasingly complex rules. I entered into the game, and in three days accumulated enough points for the lowest grade, the 'popular' badge.

The PTTK adopts a grandmotherly attitude to the crowds that it attracts to the mountains. For safety reasons, the number of points can be accumulated in one day is limited to 30 for young people (under 17) and to 40 for older people. Further, walking points can only be accumulated during the summer season (15 March to 15 December in general, 1 May to 15 October in the Tatras), and walking in the Tatras can only be counted after the first three badges (popular, small bronze, small silver) have been obtained. Signs closing the path to the summit of Rysy (because of snow) were already in position on 28 September, though nothing was visible from Czarny Staw that would cause anyone used to the Swiss alps in summer, or even Scotland, to hesitate. A mountain clean-up week was in progress during my visit, and many (mainly young) people were dragging large plastic bags over the hillsides, collecting tins, cigarette packets and miscellaneous refuse.

One weekend was spent in the Karkonosze and one in the Tatras. At the south end of the Karkonosze are the Stolowe (the 'Table' Mountains), so-called from their flat tops. They are not high (under 1,000m) but are remarkable for the eroded sandstone rock formations to be found in many places. I was taken to two famous sites, the Bledne Skaly (labyrinth rocks) and Szczeliniec Wielki (big clefts). The former is a level plateau (about 250 x 500m) dissected in a roughly hexagonal pattern by passages wide enough to walk along in most places, but sometimes so narrow that it was only possible to squeeze through sideways. It would have been very easy to get lost if the route through had not been marked out with the usual white/red/white footpath paint patches and occasional arrows. The latter is similar in size but the clefts are on a larger scale. The wierder rocks are given fanciful names: mushroom, little mammoth, textile shop, etc.; 69 are listed on the map.

Sniezka (1,600m) is the highest point in the Karkonosze, easily reached from Karpacz by a chair lift to Mala Kopa (1,375m). It was of special interest to me, as the scene of my brother-in-law's escape from Germany in the 1930s; he skied up the then German side and 'accidentally' down the Czech side. The top is cluttered with buildings (observatory, Czech and Polish restaurants), the most interesting being the chapel built in 1665-1681 to establish that the peak was Silesian, not Bohemian. The present Czech-Polish boundary puts the chapel a couple of metres inside Poland. Much of the boundary between Poland and Czechoslovakia runs along mountain ridges, and marked

only by small concrete posts painted white with red tops. Here there is a wide 'Polish-Czech Friendship Path' running roughly along the boundary, sometimes in one country and sometimes in the other, paved with granite setts and on the level stretches as wide as a minor road. It did not fit my idea of what a mountain path should be, and I had to keep reminding myself that it was probably running above the summit of Ben Nevis.

The Tatra mountains are higher (about 2,500m) and grander than the Karkonosze. I spent two nights in Zakopane, with two Polish companions and one English. Use of cable cars and 'buses' enabled us to start on Kasprowy Wierch (1,895m) and walk back via the 'schronisko' (see above), at Hala Gasienicowa and Kuznice. Another 'bus' took us to Wlosienica, from which it is a short walk to the lakes Morskie Oko ('Eye of the Sea') and Czarny Staw (Black Tarn). These are perhaps the most famous excursion points in the Polish Tatras, and seats in the 'bus' have to be booked in advance. The weather had changed from sunshine to mist, but there were occasional glimpses of Mnich and Rysy (2,499m, the highest in the Polish Tatras). As in the Karkonosze, the paths were mostly paved with granite, though not as wide.

THREE DAYS WITH THE SAC

W. Kirstein

It was 50 years ago that I joined the SAC Section Uto and only once before the 1939/45 War and three times after the War had I an opportunity of skiing or climbing with them. This year (1980) I read in their monthly bulletin these lines:—

The "Pizzo Forno" 2,907m. 18th to 20th August.

Monday: Train Zurich — Lavorno, from there by Postcar to Chironico.

Ascent to Alp Sponda 3½ hours (sleeping at this hut).

Tuesday: Ascent of Monta Forno. Time 3½ hours.

Wednesday: Descent to Lavorno 2½ hours.

As in most summer holidays I spent a fortnight in Pontresina again. The weather was marvellous and I was able to do all the walks I love so much — Segantini Hut, Piz Languard without using the chairlift, Albula Pass to the d'Eschia hut, from which I had climbed Piz Kesch in 1972, and a walk up to the Ova Cotschna, which adjoins the Piz Rosatch, dividing the Roseg Valley from the Upper Engadine.

On 16th August Bertha and I moved to Bivio for the ABM SAC Meet and on the following day with Paddy Boulter's party walked up to the Septimer Col and enjoyed from there the magnificent view of the Bregaglia peaks.

I wished I could have remained in Bivio when I realised that Paddy would lead each day on a different peak, but I had already booked this tour with the Uto Section and could not very well cancel my booking.

After leaving Bivio I drove across the Lukmanier Col, which was a new route for me. The road leads past a large lake at the top of the col and this I found to be one of the most beautiful of the Alpine cols. The road then goes down to Biasca in the Leventina Valley. I turned right following this valley towards the Gotthard col to Lavorno, where twelve Uto climbers, including two ladies, arrived punctually by train at 2 p.m. I was glad to be of assistance with transport to Chironico as the Postcar could not take all of them.

The weather was wonderful but in the Ticino it was especially hot. My rucksack was somewhat heavy as I had asked the hotel in Bivio to give me food for 3 days and they had been more than generous with their provisions.

The ascent to the hut from the little village of Chironico, where I left the car, was very steep indeed — the zig-zag turnings up the steep and very long path to the hut did not seem to end. It took us 5 hours to reach the hut, but I was amazed when I saw it. The old hut had been destroyed by an avalanche and the SAC Section Ticino had built a new one, where one found every comfort one could expect in a hut. My new friends as well as the few old ones whom I knew were obviously used to staying at huts. There was no guardian there during our stay but in no time at all a wonderful dinner was prepared with plenty to drink. Soon after dinner we settled down for the night and I think we all slept very well after the strenuous ascent.

The next morning was lovely again, though some threatening clouds started to rise from the valley and I feared we would be in mist on the summit. However the clouds stayed south and east of our target and only formed an attractive background for the photographs taken, when we arrived on the summit after an ascent of 4 hours 15 minutes. How pleasant it was to make the ascent with a lighter rucksack than on the previous day, doing some scrambling and crossing some snowfields en route.

The summit had room for all of us and the views of the Ticino peaks were wonderful indeed. Though these peaks are not as high as the Valais or Engadine mountains they are very beautiful and a number of them looked as if they could offer rather hard climbing as well.

That night in the hut the leader of the tour gave us a talk about the various kinds of stones found in the Swiss mountains. I heard how important this knowledge is for the Swiss, who have to build so many roads and tunnels in their mountains. I was amazed how much the members of the party knew in this respect and how little I knew in comparison.

On Wednesday morning we walked down to the valley and enjoyed a pleasant lunch with drinks in the open at Chironico. I made my way back to Bivio across the Lukmanier col after saying touching farewells to my new and old friends.

SHORTER REPORTS OF MEMBERS' ACTIVITIES

Hamish M. Brown managed to go stravaiging to Turkey, Morocco and Ireland in the last year, while at home a visit to St. Kilda was made on the 50th anniversary of the evacuation. 1980 saw the first Ultimate Challenge event taking place. This was Hamish's dream: a coast-to-coast backpacking trip across Scotland, which people planned and then did in the middle of May – a heat-wave crossing it proved for the sixty successful walkers, and great fun. Definitely an annual event now. Three months were spent in Ireland with plenty of hills. Two "tours" went round the Munros and saw all sorts of interesting things in this land the tourist has not yet swamped. A petrol tanker strike provided background entertainment. In the autumn the round-the-world voyage of the *Eye of the Wind* (Operation Drake) reached Gibraltar and while the ship was re-rigged Hamish took a score of the youngsters off to the Atlas where they enjoyed Marrakech, life in the Berber villages and climbed Toubkal, the highest summit in North Africa. Work on the *Groats End Walk* book filled every spare time and should be out next spring.

James Bogle

Mostly family outings in Wales this year – included in case any others in a like situation could use some recommendations:

Tre'r Ceiri, a peak of Yr Eifl with a very interesting prehistoric fort; Craig y Garn, with a party of four adults, 8, 7, 6, 5, 3 and 2 year olds(!); traverse of Moel Ddu from Llyn Cwmystradllyn to Aberglaslyn, with my daughter Katherine, 6 – on a beautiful August day we made the whole walk without meeting one other person; from Beddgelert to Rhyd Ddu with my son Daniel, 8, traversing Moel Hebog, Moef yr Ogof, Moel Lefn and Y Gyrn; and, just to keep my hand (or should it be foot?) in, on one afternoon Snowdon up by the Watkin path and down by the Rhyd Ddu track and the next day Outside Edge on the Great Slab, Cwm Silyn, and the Mantle Ridge, with Ian Calder.

P. S. Boulter

The last days of 1979 in North Wales were singularly inhospitable – gales, low cloud and intense cold prevailed and 1980 came as a welcome change. Blue skies, long views and snow on the Carneddau were our New Year present and January had a bonus as examining in Edinburgh gave me an excuse to visit the Lowthers and the Pentlands.

The Northern Dinner Meet in February was the usual great party, but the weather was atrocious, serving one valueable purpose demonstrating the excellence of Gore-tex cagoules and overtrousers, which kept Mary and I dry through a streamingly wet day.

Easter was great and long walks "back o' Skiddaw" with Mary and over the Causey Pike – Grassmoor – Grisedale Pike horseshoe with Frank Schweitzer gave wonderful days. Just before Easter we took possession of an old cottage at Salkeld Dykes above the Eden Valley and our midsummer break was devoted to chores there but short forays were made onto the lovely northern Pennine tops and we visited just about everything from Cross Fell up to the Tyne Gap. I had forgotten that these hills of my boyhood were so good – they have easy walking, grand little hidden valleys, marvellous bird life with an infinity of curlews and above all, no people at all.

We thus did nothing very important before the Alpine meet, but at least arrived reasonably fit. Bivio has been written about elsewhere in this journal, but it had a very

great personal significance for us. It was my last Presidential meet and I had chosen the place, organized the hotel and planned the days. It was a happy party in splendid surroundings and with some memorable days. Piz Turba (twice for me) Piz Surgonda and Piz Morteratsch were all lovely – the last done with our old friend and new Honorary Member Otto Stoller. It was only bad luck that our last expedition to Piz Palu was aborted by the weather, but at least a lot got done over the fortnight and the Hotel Grischuna had an ever hungry, thirsty and contented party.

In October Mary and I had a working trip to South Africa – far too brief and it only served as a revelation of what could be done there with more time. I cannot wait to go back to Cape Province to walk the hills which border the Little Karroo, Dutoit's Kloof and the flower-strewn Hottentots Holland mountains. On the last day of the trip I had to make the awful decision whether to spend the day with Dr Christian Barnard or to go to Table Mountain. Table Mountain won! With a South African climber, Ivor Davies, Mary and I and a surgical friend Peter Doyle did an early morning ascent by the Venster-India route. This continuously attractive climb is steep, but on lovely dry rock, and after we reached the top we luxuriated in the views, and the flowers. These were fascinating on the top and spectacular as we came down the Platteklip Gorge on the way back. Endless varieties of Ericas and fields of red, orange and white Watsonias (a sort of lily) with Proteas on the lower slopes. It was a memorable end to the trip and has got us very eager for another visit.

The year ended at Quarry Cottage with the family and the last days of 1980 were a challenging mélange of gales, with snow, sleet and hail, but at least the Christmas orgies were worked off before the Hogmanay party.

Peter Farrington

Over the past two years most of my excursions have been restricted to climbing, walking and camping on Islay and Jura. However the following routes were snatched on the mainland mainly in the Glencoe-Ben Nevis area.

Winter

Summit Gully/Adagio Ridge – Stob Coire nam Beith and Red Funnel Gully – A'Cailleach with Richard Gatehouse in good condition.

N.W. Gully (R. Fork) – Stob Coire nam Beith and the Sron na Lairig/Sgurr Sgreamhact Beinn Fhada Traverse in superb conditions with Eddie Tuck.

Tower Gully – Ben Nevis with Dr. A. J. Perrons. An interesting ascent in early December providing two pleasant ice pitches below Gardyloo Gully.

Walks in bad conditions on Ben Nevis (solo) Carn Mhor Dearg, Stob Coire nan Lochan, Bidean – nam Beith, Glen Ey and Glen Luibeg (Cairngorms).

Summer

Great Ridge – Garbh Bhein of Ardgour. Leac Mhor, Route I Ist Tier followed by a traverse of Beinn Bheag and Sgorr Mhic Eacherna. A magnificent weekend with Tom Shaw. Stanage-Manchester Buttress etc. with Dennis Brown. Solo walk up Cairngorm.

Max Horvat "A Dilapidated Veteran"

In the autumn of 1976 I was crippled by a spinal injury (heavy lifting). On completion of hospital treatment I was able to move about with the help of two walking sticks, each

step two inches long. I despaired. I said "Good-bye Alps" and gave up the membership of the SAC, but not of the Association.

However, the devil is seldom as black as he is painted, and time, I knew, is the best healer. The next three years brought relief, and in 1980 I felt I could take another look at the Alps in spite of my age of nearly three score and ten. I found two "learners" daring enough to venture into the mountains with a dilapidated veteran. And so in the second half of May my young neighbour Laurie, a young office colleague, Carol, and myself piled into my 23 year old Morris 1000 with our clobber and a lot of enthusiasm.

From the camp site Vermeille at Zweisimmen (very good) we made our walks to Rinderberg, La Videmanette (beaten back by deep snow), Eggli and Bodme. Eggli was particularly splendid owing to masses of croci which sprang up in their thousands everywhere along the melting snows.

At Gateig camping was not possible (snow), but the Chalet Walker (£4 per night) was a splendid alternative. A walk on the eternal snow of the Glacier des Diablerets in blazing sunshine is always a joy. So was ours. On the Col du Pillon people gathered around my Morris 1000 not believing that such an old crock is still mobile. The hills we climbed were nothing special by Swiss standards. Mere kindergarten stuff. But they were sufficient for me to stop calling myself "dilapidated". This out of season journey was highly satisfactory owing to good weather and a combination of winter scenery coupled with warm sunshine and long hours of daylight. The cost was also extremely reasonable (£125 per head).

My walking confidence restored, I found myself again in Switzerland in September. Again Gsteig, again Chalet Walker, again Glacier des Diablerets (this time on foot). From there to Saas Fee, Platjen, Cabane Britannia (in normal walking time), Felskinn, Lang Fluh and finally Simplon and the slopes of Monte Leone looking for crystals (with the 6th Class of the Rudolf Steiner Schule of Biel, by courtesy of their teacher Mr Aschlimann). After that I walked all over the place on the Seven Hills of Rome, but I would not call it mountaineering.

Now that I have found my "rear axle" (spine) to be in order again, hurray, I intend to rejoin the SAC for more walking in the Alps next year, God willing. A veteran, yes. But dilapidated no longer.

Tony Husband

First there was the February weekend in the Lakes for the Northern Dinner but the weather was not as good as usual. However it made amends at Easter when a wonderful holiday was spent at the Byam Grounds' chalet near Llanrwst with Tony and Suzanne Strawther and Richard and Elizabeth Coatsworth.

On Good Friday we went over Yr Aran and Y Wydda, descending by the Watkin path. The next day was spent on Ro Wen above Penmachno and on Easter Sunday we had a marvellous walk along Llyn Geirionydd, past Llyn Crafnant and over Creigiau Gleison. It was so hot that I discarded my shirt in favour of a sleeveless pullover and my shoulders got quite sunburnt.

Richard and Liz had to return the next day. Suzanne wanted to go on the Glyders but the weather had changed and when we got out of the car in the Nant Ffrancon the wind nearly knocked us down, and it was bitterly cold so went to Beddgelert where it started to rain so we decided to go and look at the slate mines at Ffestiniog. However when we arrived there it was so nice we went over the Moelwyns.

This shows what a good base the Byam Grounds' chalet is and it is a great pity more

members do not make use of it. I can highly recommend it. It was also very nice to see Mr. and Mrs. Byam Grounds and his amazing assortment of saxifrages – probably the best in the U.K. I brought some home and they seem to be thriving with the help of some Brassington limestone.

The next month a non climbing friend took me to see a Golden Eagle's eyrie. It was about 70ft. up a rock face on an enormous protruding block of rock. My friend assured me the eggs would be hatched so I thought it would be worth taking some photographs, but I couldn't get to the nest from below and had to climb above and descend. It was so overhanging Bob had to direct me from below and I decided to put a line on for safety and reached the eyrie with some difficulty only to find I was a day or two too early. There were two eggs.

Not wishing to keep the hen eagle away I decided to traverse off to save time but there were no hand holds so I used the rope instead but the rock overhung so much that my feet slipped off the narrow sloping ledge and I fell about 20ft. and found myself suspended in the air with two fingers of each hand badly burned. I managed to pendule myself on to a hold about 6ft. away and then descended rapidly. I was glad to see the eagle return as soon as I reached Bob and we went off to see the doctor about 15 miles away. Luckily he was at home in spite of the fact that it was a Saturday afternoon.

Three days later we found another eyrie with one chick and one egg. This was quite easy to photograph and I returned a month later to find the chick well grown but by itself. The shepherd, who had given permission, told me that the second egg never hatched. Not that it mattered much because only about one in six cases do golden eagles rear more than one eaglet. Due to the fact that the eggs usually hatch a few days apart the smaller chick often dies of starvation or is harried to death by the elder one when about six weeks old.

Whilst in Scotland the first time I went over Ben Cruachan. Another beautiful day but rather too hot and hazy to be able to get the best views from what would be a superb vantage point in the right conditions. The hydro-electric station inside the mountain is worth a visit too.

At the end of July and the beginning of August I did the Pennine Way with four friends. After the wet June and July about half the way was too wet under foot to describe and it was very heavy going although we were fortunate in that it only rained all day on the penultimate day on the Cheviots. The Cheviot itself was such a bog we could get no nearer than about 40ft. to the Trig. point. A farmer told us where to find the remains of an illicit still, probably in use about 200 years ago. It was an ideal spot and one could visualise the scene perfectly.

On the whole, apart from the middle section near Malham and High Force I found the scenery rather monotonous and preferred the Cornish coast walk.

W. B. Midgley

The year started with a couple of days skiing in the Peak District but there was not much snow.

At the end of January the family went again to the Peak to ski, but finished up walking around Edale as there was insufficient snow.

Northern Dinner weather (generally lousy) dominated the greater part of the year on the few weekends I managed to go to the hills.

There was one good day on the Wasdale Meet in March and some snow remained, but the axe was in the valley. Another Maintenance Meet with perfect weather in April and

enough workers to allow an hour or two on the hills.

We had about three weeks skiing at Easter in Italy around Courmayeur and La Thuile. A damaged ankle ensured two days off skiing but when the swelling had subsided enough to force the foot into a boot it was all "go" again (but very slowly). Modern ski equipment is really marvellous. The plastic shell clip boots are rather like a plaster cast and allow one to ski even after a fairly severe sprain and the goggles stop the tears freezing!!! This year I had an adequate excuse for not even trying to keep up with the children.

In June/July we returned to the Aosta Valley for two weeks and walked. The snow line had not receded much since Easter and all the peaks were out of condition. We skied on the Geant Glacier in lovely powder snow in July and heard dire stories of the poor wine harvest. A great holiday but no real climbing.

In August we had a weekend at the hut in Llanwrst, but the weather was not conducive to mountaineering. We did some fairly wet walking in Patterdale in September and enjoyed the Buffet Party in October. Then nothing until Christmas.

A far from inspiring year, so next year must be better.

Barrie Pennett (Grindelwald Section)

My year began by spending the New Year in the Lake District. With my wife, Valerie and son David (10), we stayed with some friends at a cottage at Underbarrow near Crook. During our stay we climbed Tom Heights, Lingmoor Fell (1,530ft), Gummers How (1,054ft) and Brent Fell (629ft). Although the heights were only small the views from the tops were wonderful.

On February 18 with my wife and son we walked from Kettlewell in Wharfedale to Tor Mere Top, Starbotton Fell and then onto Buckden Pike (2,302ft).

Later that month we enjoyed walks in the Fountains Abbey area, around Brimham Rocks, in Denefield on Otley Chevin, at Plumpton Rocks, near Harrogate, and Beamsley Beacon, near Ilkley.

On Good Friday we visited Sedbergh where we climbed Calder (2,200ft), the Calf (2,220ft), Arant How (1,989ft) and Winder (1,551ft). Easter Saturday saw us on top of Great Whernside (2,310ft). On April 13 we did Little Whernside (1,984ft) from Scar House Reservoir.

We revisited the Lake District again on April 26 where we called in at Elterwater on our way to Borrowdale. Enjoyed a short walk up Greenup from Stonethwaite. On April 27 we walked from Stonethwaite to Cockley Bridge and then up Styhead Pass to the tarn where we met up with some friends. With them we walked part of the Gable Circle. This took us past Kern Knotts, Great Hell Gate, the Needle and then up to the Sphinx Rock (or Cat Rock) and then proceeded up Arrowhead Gully to the Napes summit. We then proceeded to the Westmoreland Crag to the cairn and then on to the summit of Great Gable (2,949ft). After a short stay we then proceeded to Windy Gap and down to Styhead Tarn by Aaron Slack and back to Seathwaite.

We again visited the Lake District on May 4 when we stayed at a farm in Langdale. Climbed Pike O' Blisco (2,304ft) that day and then on May 5 we walked to Stickle Tarn and then climbed Pavey Ark (2,288ft) by Jack's Rake and then continued to Thunacar Knott (2,351ft), Harrison Stickle (2,403ft), Pike of Stickle (2,323ft) and Loft Crag (2,270ft). On May 10 my wife completed the Three Crag Walk - a walk of some 16 miles, taking in Almscliffe Crag, Caley Crag (Otley Chevin) and the Cow and Calf Rocks on Ilkley Moor.

The following Saturday (May 18) we completed the Three Peaks walk which is a total of 24 miles and takes in Pen-y-Ghent (2,273ft), Whernside (2,419ft) and Ingleborough (2,373ft). This walk from Horton-in-Ribblesdale on a very hot day proved to be most enjoyable.

The month of June saw us in Scotland where we had taken a cottage on the Isle of Mull. During a week on the island we enjoyed walks to Croig; by the loch in the Torloisk area; climbed Cnoc An Teine (138 metres); walked on the hills behind Kilninian cottage and climbed Druin Na Cille. Also visited Beinn Reudle (699ft). The following week we visited Skye and stayed at Achna Cloich where we did a short walk to Tarksavaig and over the headland to Tokavaig. Moved to Uig and one evening climbed Idrigill Head to the cairn. Later we climbed the Quiraing by the Needle to the Prison and Table and on another day climbed up to the Old Man of Storr. On our way home we stayed at Spean Bridge and climbed Ben Nevis (4,406ft).

On July 13 we re-visited Little Whernside (1,984ft) and Howsteen Gorge. In August we spent eleven days on Menorca and on an extremely hot day we visited Monte Torro, which is the highest peak on the island. During September and October we did short walks in Wharfedale and Wensleydale.

Oliver St John

Unfortunately, a period of 3 weeks of perfect weather does not necessarily equate with good Alpine conditions, and towards the end of July in the Aosta valley, we found crusted snow at all levels from about 2,500 up to 4,500 metres. On the lower slopes the snow soon disappeared, so that we were able to explore several new areas locally and climb plenty of low peaks on both sides of the valley, between the Great and Little St Bernard Passes.

However, egged on by the arrival of all my three sons, one fine week-end we walked up to the Sella Hut, above the Gressoney valley, hoping to climb the Lyskamm which had eluded our advances on several earlier occasions due to bad weather. The weather indeed was uncertain, but thanks to a very early start, it stayed fair just until we reached the West summit, 4,480m when a cold blast brought in dense cloud and snow and we had to retreat rapidly. Visibility was down to a few feet and we had no alternative but to dig a snow hole, construct an igloo of sorts, and wait. The exertion kept us warm and soon after the masterpiece was complete, it cleared just enough to retreat back to the Hut and down to the valley and home. Other, wiser, folk from the Hut either did not set out or turned back earlier and so missed the ignominy of being caught out as well as the satisfaction of achieving another fine peak under poor conditions.

The season finished on a week's holiday in Corfu, where we went to find some sun in October. Alas, it rained almost incessantly but my wife and I were determined to climb the highest peak in Corfu, Puntokrator which just fails to reach 1,000m. We made the approach on Mopeds, but their ignition systems were very temperamental in the driving rain, and we completed the last 6km on foot in visibility strongly reminiscent of Monte Rosa. The famed panorama was totally absent, the wind gusting to gale force, and we did not see the tall television relay mast until we literally bumped into it.

Ernst Sondheimer

A good year for the hills, full of variety. Three contrasting visits to Scotland: Hogmanay in Kintail with deep new snow on the mountains and deep blue sky above – so beautiful (can this ever happen again?); March in the Cairngorms with winter still on the plateau and springtime in Glen Feshie; and lastly our Scottish 'Alpine Week' in May, at the end of the long heat wave, when the dry ground made the going hard and our ice axes were quite *de trop*. We traversed the Blackmount from Inveroran to Kingshouse, walked through Glen Affric from the end of the road over Gealach an Sgairne to Loch Duich, climbed the Saddle via the Forcan Ridge and finished with tops of Beinn a' Ghlo from Blair Atholl, returning through Glen Tilt. At the end of the week we felt well exercised and my Swiss friends were (almost) ready to admit that the Alps were just a training ground for Scottish cross-country routes. At Easter I was in the German Mittelgebirge (Sauerland) with appropriate weather – snowstorm on Good Friday and sunshine on Easter Day. Two visits to Wales to be near daughter working at Bala Lakeside Motel gave Arenig Fawr, the Nantlle Ridge, a traverse of the Arans, Snowdon from the south and a fine walk northwards from Llyn Ogwen to the coast at Llanfairfechan. Kili is described elsewhere: I only add that my Swiss training walks included the very scenic Höhenweg from Grächen to Saas Fee. Finally, as a rare October treat, the Irish Munros led by Hamish Brown. As ever on such excursions there were no dull moments and – in addition to the hills and the excitements of the hunt for petrol – we inspected innumerable round towers, abbeys, castles and prehistoric monuments. Weather was, shall we say, mixed, with blizzard on Lugnaquilla, fog on Galtymore and the Reeks, pouring rain (alas) on Mount Brandon, but sunshine for the Carrauntoohil horseshoe and also for the final *bonne bouche*, Mweelrea in Mayo, a proud mountain mass (though a mere Corbett) with unforgettable views over the Connemara peaks and the sea far below. Truly a magic land.

Les Swindin

From Piz Palu to the Pencoed Pillar might be a suitable title to sum up my mountain activities this year. Both ascents done in somewhat less than ideal conditions.

To start the year six of us including Barbara and Geoff Causey had a week skiing around Veysonnaz during which time we made considerable improvement in our off-piste technique – it is certainly easier without a heavy rucksack. Back home I did little winter climbing, what good conditions there were managed to elude my visits to the Lakes and for the first time in many years I didn't pay a visit to Wales before Easter.

At Easter I was ski-mountaineering in Switzerland. Just three of us this year with ambitions of climbing in the Andermatt region of Central Switzerland. Two days alone in the Rotondo hut in more or less nil visibility was enough for a start. Back in the valley we obtained a forecast which was not encouraging but there was a glimmer of hope of finer weather in the Engadine. We drove there immediately. I had read of a ski-tour in La Montagne and we decided to follow this. The weather hadn't improved sufficiently at this stage so we passed the first day skiing the Diavolezza-Morteratsch run in very poor light. Back at Diavolezza for the night, then next day to the Boval hut and on to Piz Misau. Then from the Boval hut in successive days Piz Tschierva and Tschierva hut, Coaz hut and Il Caputschin, Coaz hut to Piz Sella and Tschimels – this with Barbara after our companion had slightly injured himself and descended to the valley – we followed. A night in Pontresina and one in the Boval hut again saw two of us climbing Piz Argient before descending to Morteratsch again in poor light. This time however we went straight up to Diavolezza for Palu. A strong and very cold north wind was blowing and even though climbing we wore all our warm clothing. From the col we climbed a very icy slope to the East Summit. This was none too easy in the buffeting

wind and it took some doing to persuade my companions to press on to the main summit. It was probably as well that the cloud obscured the view of the route between the summits, but as it turned out, they quite enjoyed the knife-edged ridge which we did partly à cheval. In retrospect they were extremely pleased as we were the only party to get that far. The tour ended with our third descent of the Morteratsch glacier in bad light.

Scotland at Whit was wet, at least where we were, and so we dropped well made plans in favour of that good old standby – 'Munro-bagging'.

Exceptionally fine weather in the Oberland towards the end of July was only spoiled by the deep snow underfoot. We climbed the Wetterhorn on snow from the Gleckstein hut. We abandoned an ascent of the Lauteraarhorn and did the Strahlegg horn for consolation and were stopped by crevasses on the Kl. Schreckhorn. The Mittelhorn went well, but the descent was ghastly in the deep soft snow. Hopes of doing the Mönch Nollen were ruined by an overnight storm which threatened to maroon Peter Fleming and me in the Guggi hut. We'd hoped to do the Peuterey ridge and this was part of the training, so still needing to acclimatise we climbed the Whympfer Couloir on the Aig. Verte.

We were all ready for the Peuterey now and conditions were apparently good, but a forecast of storms on what was to be summit day caused us to change plan. Peter was due to go home in a couple of days so we chose to attempt the Frontier ridge on Mt. Maudit. Again we were frustrated by the weather and spent the night in a very leaky Torino hut. A tent would be useful inside. In the end we opted for the Tour Ronde N. Face and a reasonably pleasant walk to Montenvers.

On Peter's departure we returned to Switzerland – this time the Valais and with Barbara I did two peaks that had awaited my attention too long, namely the Grand Combin via col de Meitin and the Weisshorn by the N. ridge, the latter only being spoiled by a chill wind and the need to rush down to Randa to facilitate return to Zinal the same day.

At home I've done much more rock-climbing than in recent years mostly in the Wye Valley, N. Wales and the Lakes where in late September once again I assisted Walter Kirstein to pursue his ambitions on Raven crag, Scout crag and Castle rock.

Pencoed Pillar came in on a wet Welsh weekend with the Glos. M.C. I'm sure it would have been quite impressive if I'd actually been able to see the exposure through the gloom.

N. E. D. Walker

Another lovely short season in Mittenwald. Walked to Saschen Haus with a young German couple; we stopped for a rest at the Wetterstein Alm before continuing on to the Hut, returning in 3½ hours back to Mittenwald without a stop. Following day, climbed Soiern Spitze from the South Ridge with Wilhelm Winneberger in misty weather, and from the top we traversed the Ridge to Oscheneidekopf in glorious weather, taking in the peaks of Risenlahnspitze, Feldenkopf, Feldenkreuz. The descent down was via Ochsen Alm and Auscher Alm.

ASSOCIATION ACTIVITIES

The A.G.M.

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held at 74, South Audley Street, London, W.1. at 7 p.m. on Wednesday, 26th November, 1980.

The President, Mr. P. S. Boulter, was in the Chair and 18 Members were present. A number of apologies for absence had been received.

1. The Minutes of the Annual General Meeting held on 28th November, 1979, which had been circulated, were approved and signed by the Chairman as a correct record. As a point arising therefrom, Mr. Whyte enquired what use had been made of Llanrwst Cottage during the year. The Chairman replied that more use had been made than in the previous year and the Meets Secretary had organised some Meets to be held at the Cottage in 1981. It had been agreed that use by the Association would no longer be on an exclusive basis.

2. After having been duly proposed and seconded, the following Officers and Committee Members were elected for the year 1981:—

President, Mr. J. P. Ledebøer; Vice President, Mr. S. M. Freeman; Hon. New Members' Secretary, Mr. J. W. Eccles; Hon. Treasurer, Mr. M. Pinney; Hon. Social Secretary, Mr F. A. W. Schweitzer; Hon. Hut Secretary, Mr. W. B. Midgley. As Committee Members:— Mr. P. V. Andrews, Miss M. Baldwin, Mr. W. Royle, Mr. J. McK Stewart, Mr. J. F. Harris, in place of Mrs. E. R. Freeman (deceased) and Messrs. Bose, Partridge, Pinney and Whyte, whose terms of office had expired.

The remaining Officers and Committee Members, being eligible, were re-elected for the year 1981.

3. The Hon. Treasurer presented the accounts for the period ended 30th June, 1980.

It was resolved that the accounts for the period ended 30th June, 1980 be adopted and the thanks of the meeting were expressed to the Treasurer.

4. The Hon. Treasurer reported that the flat rate S.A.C. Subscription had been fixed by the Committee at £14.00 and, on the recommendation of the Committee, he proposed that the Association Subscription for ordinary Members and for Affiliate Members be retained at £5.00. He further proposed that entrance fees should not be charged.

It was resolved that the Association's Subscription for ordinary and affiliate Members be retained at £5.00 and that entrance fees should not be charged.

5. *Other Business.* The Chairman reported with great pleasure that Mr. Otto Stoller had been made an Honorary Member of the Association.

Mr. Stewart requested that the names of past Officers of the Association be again recorded in the Journal. The Hon. Editor agreed to this suggestion.

Mr. Bennett proposed a vote of thanks to the President for all that he had done for the Association throughout his term of office and to his wife for her support, particularly in organising the Annual Buffet Party. The vote of thanks was carried by acclamation and, there being no other business, the Chairman declared the meeting closed at 7.30 p.m.