

**South Greenland**

**Apostelens Tommelfinger (2300 m)** An Italian expedition attempted Apostelens Tommelfinger by the S ridge and E face (1800 m). Fixed ropes and a high camp at about 1350 m were established on the S ridge. An attempt was then made on the E face before bad weather forced retreat. Six days later a party left base at 5am and reached the high camp at 11am. Two men went on and reached the top of the E face at 2010 m. at 10pm where they bivouacked with minimum equipment. They started next morning at 6am along the friable ridge and after traversing three peaks (2030, 2050 and 2070 m) they reached the foot of the final 90 m tower. An attempt was made but difficult pegging coupled with the approach of more bad weather enforced retreat. The high camp was reached at 10pm in rain and cloud, and Base Camp was re-gained the following afternoon. Persistent bad weather prevented any further attempt. Throughout the climb the rock was friable (gneisses and anorthosite, not granite as previously thought) and the difficulties were up to V+.

Party: F. de Facchinetti, A. Alberti, T. Piemontese, L. Piemontese, G. Comelli, A. Varesano, G. Carpani, R. Ive, G. Priolo, G. Cortese, A. Tersalvi, R. Sambonelli.

**Cumberland Peninsular, Baffin Island**

Doug Scott reports that 'twelve members and friends from the Nottingham Climbers' Club visited the Cumberland Peninsula in July. A number of peaks of varying difficulty were climbed. None was named by the party and few cairns were built. Anyone going to this area is guaranteed a good time with the possibility of making many first ascents—but the peak may have been climbed before! However, a good time could still be had by one and all now and in the future providing no sign is left by previous parties'.

Party: D. Crocknell, C. Davies, D. Meadows, D. Scott, R. Wood, D. Bathgate, P. Braithwaite, R. Cullier, S. Reade, R. Wilson, R. Wark, M. Webster.

**Notes 1973 British Isles****Derek Ellis**

This year has seen British climbing become even more introspective as the climbing press has latched on to the ethical arguments raging in most of the regions S of the Scottish border. Guide book editors have refused to include route descriptions on various grounds and the Editor of no less a journal than *Mountain* has castigated the author of a major route on the Great Wall of Clogwyn du'r Arddu. The problem arises from an ever-increasing number of would-be pioneers, many of them seeking fame (several only achieving notoriety), who are seeking new routes on an ever-decreasing area of rock on the major crags. This spate of activity has resulted in some fine performances in reducing aid on existing routes, but has also resulted in a large number of new routes using aid which will possibly in due course be eliminated. The call for an absolute end to the use of bolts has seldom been stronger and the Editor of *Mountain* is to be commended for the line he has taken on the issue; nevertheless many find the inevitable heart-searching on ethics as boring as Watagate or Brian Clough. Now to the notes:

**SW England****CORNWALL**

Perhaps the most significant find was a new cliff on the N coast near St Agnes—Carn Gowla—said to be a major discovery. Several fine hard routes have already been made and the remaining scope is said to be enormous. Littlejohn and Darbyshire have been responsible for the major discoveries with a number of hard and serious climbs in the XS grade. At Pentire Head Littlejohn's Eroica has become a much favoured test piece though opinions on its difficulty vary from 'delightful' to unprintable. Aid reduction on older routes has continued, producing first-rate free routes in the process though some efforts have not received whole-hearted approval, notably those of Drummond who chopped the aid/protection bolts on Beowulf as well as clearing rusting ironmongery from several other routes.

## LUNDY

The island is becoming very popular with southern-based climbers and can now be considered a major area, while scope for further development is still enormous. This year's most significant events took place in one week in April when five teams put up over 30 new routes, many in the HVS/XS bracket, as well as repeating some of the harder existing routes. Several of the new lines would certainly become popular classics if they were on the mainland.

## CHEDDAR GORGE

The strictly enforced seasonal nature of the climbing has not deterred habitués and at least fifteen new routes were put up in the winter/early spring period, while many of last year's had early repeat ascents. Bonington's old classic, Coronation Street, is by far the most popular of the harder routes and occasionally has to be queued for on a fine Sunday.

## AVON GORGE

The Gorge gains in popularity each year and new names are added regularly to the list of pioneers. This year the main protagonists appear to have been Putnam and Hicks though others are already making their mark. The surprising thing is that the spate of new routes does not appear to be drying up and although many of them are very hard and some are merely variations of existing routes, a regular flow of largely independent HVS lines is evident. One word of warning to would-be ascensionists of Suspension Bridge Buttress—don't fall off—rescues are considered good television and there can be few more accessible and better positioned camera stances.

## Wales

## SOUTH WALES

The SWMC has produced a model guide-book with a very honest and objective approach and a complete bar on 'ego tripping'; the general opinion that the plums have been picked seems to have been borne out by the fact that there has been no post guide-book boom. On the Gower Peninsula many ludicrously over-pegged routes have been cleaned up resulting, according to one critic, in enough scrap metal to keep the Margam Steel works supplied for a week. Further w little has been added in Pembrokeshire and a large crag at the w end of Pendine Sands, which I 'discovered' while bass fishing, is still apparently untouched.

## NORTH WALES

The death of Laurie Holliwel on Craig yr Ysfa has left a gap in the ranks of the habitués which will not easily be filled and the fact that he died while abseiling (as have several other leading climbers in Britain, on the Continent and in the United States) should be a lesson to all who step over the edge. Yet another object lesson comes from the death of two American climbers, one on Dinas Cromlech, the other on Ben Nevis, both using single rope tactics.

In the line of new developments and ethical arguments Clogwyn du'r Arddu is again in the forefront. Ed Ward-Drummond appears to go out of his way to seek recognition. First after several attempts he succeeded in climbing the first pitch of Shrike without the aid peg, then removed it, an act which did not receive widespread acclaim even from the purists. He then 'inspected' the unclimbed area of rock to the right of Crew's Great Wall and placed 2 pegs, then according to *Mountain* he practised moves with a Jumar attached to the fixed rope for protection. He then completed the route—A Midsummer Night's Dream—placing 2 further pitons (one for protection) and a bolt. Several other climbers had inspected the route by abseil and some had expressed the opinion that here was a route for the 'next generation', whatever that might mean. Others have expressed revulsion and fears for what might happen to the sacrosanct stretch of rock between Cenotaph Corner and Cemetery Gates on Dinas Cromlech, if someone were ruthless enough to place a few bolts before an ascent. It is perhaps ironical that earlier on Ed Grindley had chopped the bolt from The Boldest before leading it on sight, an act which was widely approved.

On Anglesey the number of new routes has fallen to a trickle though Evans, Wyvill and Rodgers have found a few. The most notable achievement seems to be Littlejohn's Pagan on Red Wall—Left Hand. Rowland Edwards has continued his campaign on Little Orme's Head with various partners. The popularity of the Llandudno cliffs has

led to fears for the guillemot and razorbill colonies. It is hoped that a voluntary ban on climbing between March and July will be observed.

Visits by leading European climbers including the Russian ace Alexander Kubanov seems to have left the locals in something of a turmoil, as does that of the American Henry Barber. Perhaps it will help to get rid of the 'Best Climber in the World' tag that crops up now and again in the popular press.

## England

### DERBYSHIRE/YORKSHIRE

The theory that gritstone is worked out has taken a severe knock this year particularly at Almscliff where around ten routes, either new or in an acceptable style, have appeared and the much famed Wall of Horrors has been reduced to little more than a very hard test piece by Syrett's discovery of a placement for a piece of non-blade-shaped (and therefore acceptable) metal. On Curbar Edge, long famed as the 'Cloggy of Grit', Ed Ward-Drummond has been at work producing Linden (XS), a very hard and serious route with two skyhook moves.

On limestone new routes appear almost every weekend resulting in severe competition, especially for free ascents of artificial routes. Teams are falling over one another to get at the really hard ones like the Diedre and the Central route at Kilnsey, which now go more or less free; accusations of top-roping and of inspection before ascent are rife. The main protagonists are the Livesey/Sheard team and Syrett with various partners. In the meantime Tony Barley continues, apparently aloof from the competition, producing fine routes everywhere, while Alan Austin climbs on without talking much about it. Gordale has had dozens of new routes added and probably has scope for dozens more. The first pitch of Cave Route, bulging though it is, is living a charmed life. Perhaps it is the difficulty of avoiding touching any of the artificial garbage rotting in the cracks that protects it. Meanwhile down at Stony Middleton the locals seem to have admitted at long last that they cannot squeeze many more climbs out of the crowded crag and have sneaked across the road much to the annoyance of the quarrymen.

### THE LAKE DISTRICT

The old controversy—'when is a route not a route'—is again the main subject of discussion in this area and climbers seem to have split into 2 factions, one inside, the other outside the local guide-book writing circle. Basically, Allan Austin and those helping him in the preparation of the FRCC guide-books decided either to omit some routes altogether or, in other cases, to publish new lines as variations of existing lines. The grounds for this were the excessive use of aid over short distances and the placing of, slings by abseil. The climbers affected, notably Rob Matheson, complained to the climbing press and the matter became a subject for public debate.

Meanwhile in Borrowdale, MacHaffie continues steadily with a list of lines to do before he retires; Livesey has been active here too, straightening existing lines on Black Crag. Many of the existing routes are receiving second ascents and, with no less than 6 guide-books being revised, here as elsewhere there is talk of revising the grading system.

In Langdale the flow of very hard routes shows no sign of drying up with several leaders involved. On Pavey Ark, Ed Grindley now has 3 routes to his credit, the hardest being Brain Damage (225 ft, XS). On Scafell several new lines were found during the summer and repeats of some of the more recent routes suggest a little upgrading has been going on; one wonders how long it will be before these great crags too become the scene of controversy. Hopefully their remote nature may delay things for a few years.

## Scotland

Without doubt the highlights of the winter were the solo ascents of Point Five and Zero Gullies by Ian Nicholson, who was followed on Point Five by Dave Knowles. Starting just after 9, Nicholson was back in Fort William for a dinner-time pint. In fact the gullies were frequently climbed this year and times were much faster on average—further evidence, if it is needed, of the superiority of front-pointing over step-cutting. Overall however the winter proved disappointing, mainly due to the long mild spells.

In the Cairngorms the bothy controversy, which came to a head following the 'Cairngorm Tragedy' is still unsettled. The situation at the time of writing is that the Mountaineering Council of Scotland, the Mountain Rescue Committee of Scotland and the

SMC recommended that they be removed from their existing positions. Arrangements were made for re-erecting them or building new shelters in more suitable places. At the last minute, due in part to public outcry and in part to legal obstacles, the removal operation did not take place. Visitors should check locally for information on relocation before setting out. Hell's Lum Crag received two new hard routes from Cunningham, March and O'Donovan, while March and party completed the first roped traverse of Patey's 8000-ft Crab Crawl on Creagh Meaghaidh.

On rock Pete Minks led the second ascent of the Pinch on the Trilleachan Slabs, which has defeated several top men from both sides of the border. The hold chippers, who have ruined many a good route on gritstone, seem to have moved in and ruined the thin moves on Hammer. Scotland is now the 'in' place for Americans for a steady stream of Yosemite climbers camped in Fort William in both winter and, to a lesser extent, summer. The fine weather later in the year was missed by those who were in the Alps, but most of the harder existing routes had repeat ascents 'between showers' at some time.

In the E, John Mothersole (the discoverer of the Ogmores sea cliffs in S Wales) continues to find new routes on Creag an Dubh Loch but little else has been reported. Unfortunately information is difficult to come by; I spent 8 months in Scotland over the winter including a month in Skye and found out very little. The basalt crags on the Misty Isle are fantastic, particularly around Kilt Rock and the scope for sea traversing is almost limitless; perhaps our limestone experts with their skill on desperately loose rock will 'find' it in the near future.

(My thanks are due to all the correspondents who have helped with these notes and particularly to *Mountain*, the wide coverage of which has helped me to collate and, hopefully, balance information received, as well as filling many gaps.)

#### NEW GUIDE BOOKS

*Climbing in Cornwall* T. Carver, P. Stanier and P. Littlejohn (James Pike Ltd, St Ives, 40 p).

This covers the present state of affairs everywhere in the county outside West Penwith. It is good to see that the possibilities outlined in various articles in the *Climbers' Club Journal* and in *A Climber in the West Country* (David & Charles, 1968) are at last being dealt with in a thoroughly competent fashion by local enthusiasts.

*The Mountains of England and Wales* George Bridge. (Gaston/West Col, 1973, £3.40). This is a reference book listing the separate mountains and tops, 408 in all, in the two countries over 2000 ft high first by district, then in order of altitude and thirdly in alphabetical order. It also contains a glossary of Welsh mountain names and a list of the highest point in each county.

*Rhum* Hamish M. Brown (Cicerone Press, Manchester, 1972, 75 p).

A very informative guide to the rock climbs on Rhum, handy in weight and size. The first 20 pages contain much information on access, accommodation, the flora and fauna and the history of the island.

*Snowdon Range* Showell Styles (Snowdon District Guide Books, Gaston/West Col, 1973, £2.80).

One wonders who buys all this type of guide-book, but from their frequent appearance in different series they would seem to be a worthwhile publishing proposition. A prolific and competent writer about easier climbing and a local expert, Showell Styles has turned in an excellent first volume for this series of walkers' guides. The price seems a little high and the finish not as resistant to the elements as might be desirable in a book intended for field use.

*Great Langdale* (or is it *Langdale*?) J. A. Austin and R. Valentine (Fell and Rock Club, 1972).

The considerable controversy surrounding this guide-book can be followed in Nos 28 and 29 of *Mountain*. As climbers' guides increase in thickness they become more in the way on the actual climbing. Has the time come for 2-tier editions—one up to mild S, the other from there to impossible? The rabbit is not interested in the overhanging steep between his sorts of line, while the expert does not need to carry around descriptions of rocks which for him are indistinguishable from the walk to the foot of the crags. The compilers of a work of this sort are very thorough, while a host of critics is checking their every word and comma, so that the result *has* to be impressive.