

NOTES ON CLIMBING IN THE BRITISH ISLES

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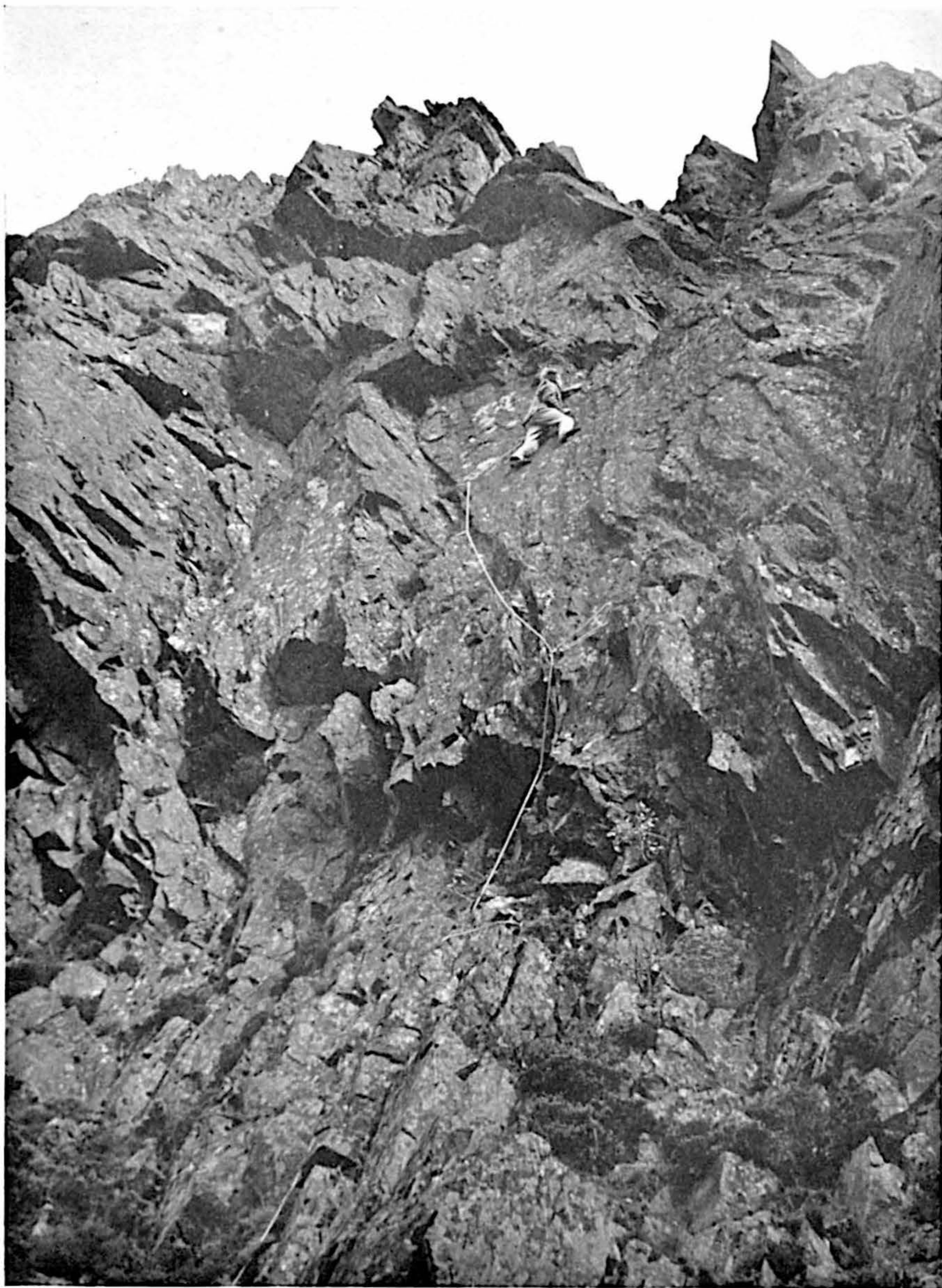
LAKE DISTRICT 1960-61: *by J. Allan Austin*

THE year 1960 was probably the best climbing year since the war. New routes in that year seem to have reached unusually high standards of difficulty and quality. The following year little of importance was done in the way of new climbing, but many of the 'top' routes were repeated and it would seem as though the 'top of the pyramid' has broadened considerably.

On Scawfell the outstanding event was Geoff Oliver's lead, in a two-day ascent, of the great open corner above Morning Wall. It takes one of the best lines on the cliff and is reputed to be very hard. It is named Ichabod. L. Brown also led two new routes on the East Buttress, Armageddon, which must be a very serious and difficult route, and Centaur, an easier route just to the right of Great Eastern. He also led the second ascent of Mayday Direct. No aid was used, and instead of moving right to finish he climbed the groove direct; he said that it seemed very hard. Trinity Climb was repeated by three parties led by J. A. Austin, E. Metcalf and L. Brown and was compared with Hell's Groove. The following year Centaur was repeated by a large party; D. Millar, G. Roberts and K. Brannon shared the lead. Joe Griffin led the third ascent. Ronnie Moseley's very fine Phoenix Climb was repeated by Austin and Metcalf who found it considerably harder than the guide-book routes.

On Heron Crag, Eskdale, only twenty minutes from the road, L. Brown led a steep, clean new route up the central pillar, named Gormenghart (about Hard V.S.). It was repeated the following year by P. Walsh and J. A. Austin, leading through and adding a direct start, and by D. Whillans. On the right flanking wall two new routes were climbed, Spec Crack in which Walsh, Austin and Metcalf led through, and Flanker led by Austin and Metcalf.

In Langdale Elimiot was repeated by Walsh, J. Maclean, B. Kershaw, Metcalf and L. Brown; these ascents, with Cunningham's third, bring the total to eight. On the East Buttress of Pavey Ark, Austin and Metcalf made two steep new routes, Red Groove and Astra. Astra in particular is a big route and takes an attractive line up the outside edge of the 'impossible groove' above Hobson's Choice. On the same wall Metcalf made the second ascent of Cascade. Kershaw led two new



Photo, A. Evans]

BUCKSTONE HOW. CLEOPATRA: THE DELICATE TRAVERSE AT THE TOP OF PITCH ONE.

hard routes on the Neckband, of which Twain Cracks is the best. It climbs the very obvious twin cracks in the middle of the buttress. The old line up the right edge of A. Buttress on Dow Crag has at last been led. L. Brown was the successful leader and he named it Sidewalk.

The hard routes on Castle Rock have achieved, if not popularity, a respectable number of ascents. Last year Triermain Eliminate had two ascents, H. J. Banner's and M. Boysen's, and this year three, B. Ingle's, L. Brown's and P. Nunn's. Rigor Mortis was repeated last year by Boysen, also by L. Brown (who used an extra piton and slings), to give its second and third ascents, and this year Nunn made the fourth. It now seems certain that the palm of difficulty rests with Rigor Mortis. In 1960 P. Ross and G. Oliver made a new girdle, a sort of counter Gossard running from right to left, and Oliver led a new route, Agony, crossing Zig Zag and Overhanging Bastion. This was repeated the following year by Austin and Metcalf.

Further over in the Eastern Fells, Whillans led the break on the left of Hangover on Dove, naming it Extol. It is a big route and seems to be very serious. It was repeated the following year by Boysen. Jack Soper added a start and finish to Deflected Route on Scrubby, naming it Hrothgar, and made a girdle traverse which is reported to be considerably harder than the existing routes on the cliff.

Each year brings a new crop of routes on Shepherd's Crag, and these last two years are no exception. The routes are difficult, but very short, and are of interest mainly to the local climber. Ross's and Jockey's route, Falcon Crag Buttress, has had several ascents. It is a good route, but with the full quota of pitons (four) the standard is only just about Hard V.S. Nunn led Post Mortem on Eagle Crag. This was only the third ascent.

Buckstone How was the scene of an interesting rediscovery. Peascod's last major route, Cleopatra, after nine years without an ascent, was repeated by four parties this year. It was found to compare in difficulty with Harlot's Face, but seems a better route. It must be one of the best 'roadside' climbs in the Lakes.

The use of pitons on routes previously climbed clean unfortunately seems to be increasing. Seven pitons were recently used on the first pitch of Eagle Front, and five have been removed from Kipling Groove. Pitons have been put in even on old climbing classics such as Deer Bield Chimney.

WALES 1960-61: by J. Neill and C. T. Jones

In 1960 and 1961 it has become clear that the Llanberis Pass is practically worked out at any rate for the present generation. This is well illustrated by D. T. Roscoe's fine new guide-book, *Llanberis North* (the

corresponding volume for the south side of the Pass is in preparation). The only new climbs in the area are not of great importance—two small routes on Craig-y-Rhaeadr by I. Clough in 1960, and in 1961 the Mole on Dinas Mot by J. Brown, and Slime Wall on Clogwyn-y-Grochan, to the left of Broad Walk, by P. Crew and C. T. Jones. Most of the hardest routes in the Pass now carry considerable traffic. Perhaps the most significant event has been the solo ascent of Diagonal Route on Dinas Mot by L. J. Griffin.

Yet another influx of fresh blood has appeared, in the form of a nucleus of young climbers doing the hardest climbs, among them B. Ingle, Crew, N. J. Soper, B. Brewster and M. Boysen. These climbers have concentrated on Clogwyn-du'r-Arddu, in 1961 repeating such climbs as Shrike and The Mostest, as well as The Thing on Dinas-y-Cromlech and Suicide Wall at Idwal; they have also originated new climbs of a similar standard.

In 1960 the new climbs on Clogwyn-du'r-Arddu were the Hand Traverse by H. I. Banner and Guinevere by Jones, both on the Pinnacle, and the Steep Band by Jones on the belt of rock above, to the left of the Far West Buttress. The most important new climb of 1961 was the Pinnacle Girdle by Soper and Crew, a fine and very difficult route. Other new routes are Serth, between Sunset Crack and Llithrig, by Ingle and Crew, Scorpio, between Pedestal Crack and the Corner, by Soper, and The Leastest, an artificial line at the extreme right-hand end of the West Buttress, by D. L. Noble and C. J. Mortlock. Banner has provided a middle pitch between his Direct Start to Pigott's and the Wall Finish to make a complete climb independent of Pigott's. In 1960 Taurus and Troach were repeated, and have since been climbed several times.

As a result of these activities, and those of climbers previously on the scene, Clogwyn-du'r-Arddu is reaching the same state as the Pass, and here again a new guide-book (by Banner and Crew) has been written, to be published in the spring of 1962. This guide-book gives details of sixty-six routes, graded as follows: D. (one), V.D. (four), S. (five), V.S. (seventeen), Hard V.S. (sixteen), X.S. (twenty-three). The last group are all graded as Extremely Severe, the grade of Exceptionally Severe having been dropped, as was done also in the guide-book *Snowdon South* by J. Neill and Jones which was published in 1961. There are now probably no routes in Wales which cannot be done by at least six leaders, and in these circumstances it is felt that the grade of Exceptionally Severe is best left for the use of the next generation.

Elsewhere in the central part of Snowdonia there is little to report. Two minor new routes have been done at Ogwen, Sweet Sorrow on Clogwyn-y-Bustach ('the Facet of the Gribin') by R. James and Vegetable Gut on Gallt-yr-Ogof by J. G. Childs.

Exploration has mostly been directed to the outlying parts of the district. The most significant event there has been the exploitation of two new crags by J. Brown, both providing very hard climbs. Carreg Hyll-Drem is on the west flank of the Moelwyns in the Snowdon East area, immediately above the main road near Carreg. This was explored in 1960, the main climbs being Primus, the Girdle Traverse and Hardd. The last is the principal route of the cliff, so far, a difficult and very steep climb. In 1961 it was provided with a direct finish by Boysen. The other new crag, the more important one, is the South-east face of Castell Cidwm near Rhyd-ddu in the Snowdon West area. This crag too is steep, with many overhangs. The climbs so far are Vertigo, Dwm (by H. Smith) and the Curver.

In the Snowdon South area there was a revival of exploration in preparation for the new guide-book mentioned above, and new climbs were done in Nantgwynant and at Tremadoc, the climbs being Avalon, Acropolis, First Slip, Leg Slip, Vector and the Wasp. All these are good climbs, but the rest are overshadowed by Vector, the result of Brown giving his attention to Tremadoc. On Craig Bwlch-y-Moch, Vector is probably the finest climb in the Snowdon South area, and is now filling the same role as a graduating climb for leaders as does Cenotaph Corner in the Pass. Since the appearance of the guide-book Brown has continued his activities at Tremadoc, and a whole cluster of new climbs of similar standard has appeared—the Grasper, the Neb, the Fang, Striptease and Nimbus on Craig Bwlch-y-Moch and the Toit on Craig Pant-Ifan. Other new climbs are Clapton's Crack by G. Clapton and Kestrel Cracks (a variation of the Neb) by Jones on Craig Bwlch-y-Moch, and Sphincter and Ek Borge by Jones on Craig-y-Gesail.

In the Snowdon East area J. R. Lees has done much exploration in the Moelwyns with his R.A.F. Mountain Rescue team, the crags there generally affording climbing of a milder character, very suitable for training purposes. As a result of these activities he has produced an interim guide-book to the area which it is proposed to publish in 1962, since the complete guide-book to the district cannot be produced for some years. His best climb here, in 1960, was Waspie, a fine girdle of Clogwyn-yr-Oen. Brown has now visited this area also and produced Overhanging Crack, between Mean Feet and Double Criss. Elsewhere in the Snowdon East area Carreg Alltrem has been the most fruitful cliff, with Fratricide Wall by Jones and Lavaredo by James. The latter, though by no means as difficult as some others, is a magnificent climb, perhaps the best in the area. There has also been exploration further south and further north. In the Rhinogs Lees has rediscovered Craig Bodlyn, with one good climb so far, the Spade. Cader Idris has seen new activity, with routes on Cyfrwy by D. Burgess (Rib and Slab,

and Route II) and R. Handley (Route I), and on Mynydd Moel by Brown (Route Central) and Burgess (Ritander). In the Carneddau Lees has filled in most of the gaps on Craig Braich-Ty-Du. With the exhaustion of possibilities in the central area, and now increasingly in South Snowdon also, the Carneddau may serve as the future field of operations of the younger climbers, to provide the new hard climbs which they need to maintain their interest in Welsh climbing. So far only one climb of this kind has fallen—the main groove to the right of Central Route on Llech Du, the most obvious line for a new route in the whole of the Carneddau. This was led by J. Anthoine, with considerable artificial aid.

An event which has affected the welfare of climbers very considerably has been the reorganisation of the Vaynol estate. In the interests of better estate management farms have been consolidated on new leases, smallholdings eliminated, etc., and a ban placed on camping and parking of caravans in the Llanberis valley. As most of the younger climbers have to rely on camping in the Pass to obtain their climbing this could have serious consequences for climbing. The B.M.C. North Wales Committee have however carried on negotiations with the estate which appear likely to end happily. A rather similar situation in the Ogwen valley, the result of action by Caernarvonshire County Council, has also had a satisfactory outcome. The B.M.C. North Wales Committee is also active in matters of footpaths, rights-of-way and access to crags, where difficulties have arisen.

THE PEAK DISTRICT 1960-61: *by Eric Byne*

Gritstone

The majority of the hard routes are being done with monotonous regularity by numerous climbers from many clubs, and it is only such exceptional routes as Moyer's Buttress on Gardom's Edge, the Sentinel Crack at Chatsworth, Insanity at Curbar and Quietus at Stanage which have no appearance of becoming trade routes for V.S. men.

During the last eighteen months many new climbs have been discovered, and many odd gaps filled in. Over fifty new routes have been added to those previously recorded at Stanage. The majority of these are on the smaller buttresses previously neglected around the High Neb area. These are mainly the invention of the Alpha Mountaineering Club, a young and very active group, amongst whom such members as Allan Parker, Peter Bamfield and Bob Brayshaw have been particularly keen. These new routes are all of hard character, and on any other edge than Stanage would have been exploited long ago.

This group of young climbers has also been responsible for many new routes on the great edge of Kinderscout (between Fairbrook Naze

and the Downfall Ravine), and for the pioneering of the Lower Tier Girdle Traverse on the Staffordshire Roches—a very fine excursion!

The Rock and Ice stalwarts have, of course, added their quota. Brown led such fine routes as The Blurter (Stanage), Roof Route (Rivelin), Green Crack and L'Horla (Curbar). Whillans produced Centaur (Stanage), Goliath and David (two very fierce cracks at Burbage), and of course the great Sentinel Crack at Chatsworth and the Cave Wall at Froggatt.

Numerous other routes of all gradings have been added by the active members of the Peak Climbing Club, Oread M.C., Manchester and Sheffield University Climbers and Manchester Gritstone Club. The great quarries such as Dovestones, Lawrencefield, Den Lane and Millstone Edge, have all been extensively explored, the emphasis being on free climbing and many of the one-time peg routes being led clean.

A few great problems remain—Long John, the smooth slab on Froggatt just left of Recess Slab, still defies leadership—no one has yet succeeded in traversing across the great left wall of Sail Buttress on Birchens Edge, thus making possible the Girdle—and there are still a number of unclimbed walls on Stanage awaiting a future generation. But on the whole the possibilities now left on grit for major new climbs seem very small. Details of the newer routes on gritstone can be found in the last two or three issues of the *M.A.M. Journal*, and in the spring of 1961 the Manchester University Mountaineering Club published a guide to recent climbs, compiled from the *M.A.M. Journal* and notes from the various clubs active in the area.

Limestone

The future of Peak District exploration probably now lies on mountain limestone. Members of the Manchester Gritstone Club, who have spent a considerable time exploring and producing routes on the rock walls and buttresses that line the Wye between Buxton and Monsal Dale, are at the moment compiling a guide to Derbyshire Limestone. In this they have received assistance from the limestone enthusiasts of the Sheffield University, Summit, and Rock and Ice Clubs.

More and more limestone routes are yielding to free climbing; in fact there seems almost an aversion to using pegs on what was until recently considered purely pegging rock. This, no doubt, is due to a greater understanding of the rock, its problems and safety measures required.

In the Matlock-Cromford area Dennis Gray, Steve Read, Peter Hassel, Des Hadlam and others have been pioneering many hard free climbs of high quality, on High Tor and Willersley Crag. At Willersley, where there is much gardening to be done before the routes are ready for general use, the accent is always on free climbing, and pegging is definitely discouraged.

IRELAND 1960-61: *by Sean Rothery*

During the past two years the crags at Lough Barra in Donegal seem to have received attention from almost every rock climber in Ireland. Lough Barra (the lake of the Driftweed) lies in a grassy pleasant valley between the Glendowan and Derryveagh Mountains. The buttresses all face south, and the rock is a particularly rough-textured white granite. Most of the main lines have now been worked out on the three buttresses, and an interim guide to the whole county of Donegal will be published in 1962.

In the next valley, the beautiful Glen Veagh, the first ascent of the main face of the crag was made by a Dublin party, giving a 500 ft. V.S. climb. Several attempts were made in 1961 to force other routes up the main face but the lines of weakness are few and the rock is not quite so well textured as at Lough Barra.

At Glendalough, Co. Wicklow, there was tremendous activity. The number of rock climbers frequenting Camaderry crag has more than doubled and the average age has dropped considerably. The seventeen- and eighteen-year-old 'tiger' group so evident nowadays in Wales at last has its counterpart in Ireland. With all this activity the major routes were climbed again and again—X.S. routes¹ like Spillikin, Cornish Rhapsody, Scimitar, etc., are now normal climbs. There is not much room left on Camaderry for new routes, but several were found and climbed. A new hard route was made to the left of Spillikin. At Luggala, also in Co. Wicklow, the main face is being constantly attacked, but it appears that any further direct route will be almost wholly artificial.

In Connemara, one new route was made, and a few parties visited Ben Corr, which may soon become popular as Donegal is worked out.

The sandstone and conglomerate crags of the Comeragh Mountains in Co. Waterford produced a few new climbs, of which no details are available as yet, but this area will undoubtedly get much more attention in the near future.

In the Mourne Mountains there seems to be an inexhaustible supply of routes on these small granite tors and the Belfast Section has a new climbing hut at Dunnywater.

The number of rock climbers in the country has increased considerably during the past two years. A new club has been formed in University College, Dublin, and Dalkey Quarry has proved to be a training ground of immense value.

The new climbs of 1960-61 include:

¹ In Ireland X.S. is used to denote a grade harder than V.S. It corresponds roughly to Extremely Severe in Welsh grading.

Lough Barra—Bingorm West

On Bingorm West five short new climbs were made to the west of the Delta Face, all in the V. Diff.—Severe class. On the Delta Face is Aiseiri (360 ft., V.S.) by P. O'Leary and E. Goulding. Just to the right of the Delta Face lies the direct Thin Gully. This has been climbed by Brian MacCall and party and is now Risorgimento (540 ft., V.S.). Just to the right of Surplomb Grise and sharing the last pitch is Rule Britannia (X.S.) by H. Banner and J. O'Neill. This was an attempt to climb the hitherto unclimbed main face of Bingorm West; the obvious direct continuation was omitted through lack of time. Later in the year Miss E. Healy with P. O'Halpin led a direct route up this face, about 30 ft. to the right of Rule Britannia. This is Ploughshare (400 ft., X.S.). Betty Healy also did Fomorian (H.S.) with Frank Winder. To the right of Fomorian is Firbolg (300 ft., V.S.) by Sean Rothery, O'Halpin and E. Wilkinson. The range of slabs to the right of this yielded to Rothery, Noel Brown and party a surprisingly enjoyable 300 ft. Severe route, Avalanche.

Central Bingorm

The central crag has been opened up with six new climbs, the first on the left-hand edge being Grey Slab (275 ft., V. Diff.) by Noel Brown and party. Bin Man (450 ft., S.) by Miss Healy, MacCall and party follows on the first series of slabs. On the largest rock mass of the buttress is Twilight (310 ft., S.) by Noel Brown and Rothery, and White Slab (300 ft., S.) by Rothery and party. To the right of the main deep gully is Apollo (210 ft., V.S.) by O'Leary, O'Halpin and P. Power.

Bingorm East

Two new climbs were made here: Risotto (150 ft., V. Diff.), by E. Gallagher, Noel Brown and party, and Sabotage (500 ft., S.), by Miss Healy and Winder.

Glen Veagh

Only one new climb was made here, Sinn Fein (510 ft., V.S.) by Rothery, Noel Brown and Frank Butler. This was an ascent of the main face of the buttress, following an obvious weakness about 120 ft. to the right of the centre, and is a fine mountaineering route.

Mourne Mountains

There were two new climbs of V. Diff. standard made on the lower cliffs of Cove Mountain, and in November, 1961, Tony Ingram made a new Hard V.S. climb. This is reputed to be of a new standard for the Mournes. On Douglas Crag there are two new climbs, Barrier

(300 ft., H.S.) by J. Childs and I. Firth and Organ (200 ft., Diff.) by Firth and J. Challoner. On Ben Corm there are also two new climbs, White Heather (80 ft., S.) by D. Parkinson and D. Naylor and Child's Play (80 ft., S.) by Childs and party. On Hare's Castle three new climbs are reported, Third Party (100 ft., H.S.), Allsorts (100 ft., Mild S.) and Block Route (100 ft., Diff.), all by C. Leake, Firth and Wilkinson.

Glendalough

On Twin Buttress, Emmet Goulding and Ingram, the two twenty-four-year-old Dubliners who climbed the West Face of the Dru in bad conditions last summer, did Sarcophagus (200 ft., X.S.). This is just to the right of Spillikin and reputed to be harder. To the right of Ifreann, the obvious corner was climbed; this is Sebastian (150 ft., X.S.) by Miss Healy, Rothery and Winder sharing leads. This ascent was rather artificial but on the second ascent fewer pitons were used.