

NOTES ON CLIMBING IN THE BRITISH ISLES¹

By A. J. J. MOULAM

(Two illustrations: nos. 36–37)

NORTH WALES (1965)

THE last edition of these notes recorded the completion, in 1961, of a route that startled the climbing world in this country, and made it realise that a new generation had arrived. It was the *Pinnacle Girdle* on 'Cloggy'; and another similar milestone was passed in 1965 with the success of Clements and Potts in girdling Castell Cidwm. They persevered with attempts and explorations over several months, not solving all the problems until October. Even then the 600 ft. of continuously X.S. climbing, starting up *Dwm* and traversing right to left at a high level, took two days. The route is at least on a par with *Pinnacle Girdle*, and at the time of writing has not been repeated. Clements has also provided a major variant to *Glwm* on this cliff (with Bell) and *Erg*, a strenuous route between *Straighter* and *Central Wall* (with Beasley).

After J. Brown's winter ascents of *Slanting Gully* and *Central Gully* on Lliwedd, he turned his attention to Cloggy's Far East Buttress. The cliff between *Brwynog Chimney* and *Woubits* was unclimbed despite previous attempts; but Brown and Alcock found *The Key*, starting up *Brwynog*, breaking out right to a corner followed to the top. The route is H.V.S., but very significant in providing the start for the X.S. *Girdle of the Far East*. It crosses *Woubits*, goes up to the overhang of *Mostest* and on, finishing up *Naddyn Ddu*. Brown and Cheesmond completed the present exploration of this area with *Sinistra*, leaving *Woubits* early on the left, joining pitch 2 of *The Key* and continuing independently on its left. Crew and Alcock later did the second ascent of *Woubits*, *Left Hand*, outstanding since 1959. On the Pinnacle, Fuller and Alcock traversed below *Gargoyle* and climbed a crack between it and *Octo—Aries* at H.V.S. McHardy did the second ascent of *Pinnacle Arête*, one of the last two routes to make the guide (now once again nicely out of date). *Trapeze*, a semi-artificial climb between *Pigott's* and *Chimney*, was done

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Photo: J. A. Hartley]

NORTH WALES: J. CLEMENTS ON ERG (CASTELL CIDWM).

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by Blythe and Herly; and the season ended with *Diwedd Groove*, right of *Carpet Slab*, by R. Edwards and Boysen.

Henry Miller continued to influence (aptly) Welsh climb nomenclature when Boysen and A. Williams found *Black Spring* on the always wet slabs right of *Western Gully* on Dinas Mot. Alcock and Fuller added *Black Foot* and a route called *The Intruder*, which seems to have something in common with *Tremolite* and/or *Hiawatha*. Alcock rediscovered the cliff left of Craig y Rhaeadr and did *Cave Buttress*. He also contributed *Preamble* (H.V.S.) on the rocks right of Cyn Las. It is now probably worth resurrecting easier climbs here such as *Tiercel*, done in the 1950's, and routes followed as far back as 1920, so far unrecorded.

The Carneddau is the area left in Wales with large areas of untouched rock, but latter day exploration is at least under way. The *Great Corner*, high up on Llech Ddu, by Clements and Potts is the best route so far (X.S.), and the same party made a route up the left edge of lower Amphitheatre Wall on Craig-yr-Ysfa. It is called *Plumbagin*, uses a peg for aid on each pitch, and follows a fine line. *Heron Slab*, right of *Bending Gully*, by Moulam and G. D. Roberts is more reasonable at just V.S., and this party has made a few other minor routes in the Crafnant area and Braich-ty-Du. Routes have been made on the cliff by Aber Falls and are reported to be worth while, although none of the earlier explorers thought their doings worth recording.

Elsewhere, R. Edwards has climbed the blunt arête right of *Broadwalk* (Grochan), made a direct finish to *Pellagra* at Tremadoc and a route following the arête between *Creagh Dhu Wall* and *The Wasp*. The girdle of Craig yr Ogof (Cwm Silin) is virtually achieved: Crew and Ingle to the big groove on *Crucible*, and Ingle and McHardy to the top of *Ogof Direct* and the leftward slanting groove above the belay. Finally, in Cwm Idwal Banner climbed *Rake End Wall*, going direct to the foot of the chimney and taking the wall on its right.

LAKE DISTRICT (1965)

On the big, classical cliffs the rate of development has naturally slowed down, and with the recent tooth-comb activity on Scafell's East Buttress it is not surprising that Bonington's discovery is very hard indeed. As with many modern climbs, the line of *Holy Ghost* is rather odd, taking about 30 ft. of *Gremlin Groove*, crossing to the top of *Trinity's* long pitch and zig-zagging up the rock between. Roper did the fifth ascent of *May Day Direct* and regards it as about as hard as the old crux, a view shared by others who have done it.

All the routes on Esk Buttress have been repeated, *Central Pillar* four more times (making eight in all) and *Red Edge* twice more (making four). These last ascents were by Roper and Toole, and the latter found it the

harder of the two routes. Roper compares it with *Troach* (Cloggy), but suggests it is rather harder. Pillar Rock is rather left alone, but Cramm has added one or two routes, the most impressive being *Sheol* (above *Grooved Wall*), which looks very hard indeed.

The great hanging groove above *Deception* on Pavey Ark proved easier than expected, although H.V.S. It fell to Austin, and is called *Rain-maker*. Three more parties have done *Gimmer String* and confirm that it is an excellent climb of similar standard to *Astra*. In White Gill the corner between *Laugh Not* and *Inferno* was climbed by Austin—*Man of Straw*, at about the level of the *Slip* climbs at Tremadoc, hard but not as serious as *Eliminot*. Ross has also climbed through the overhangs above *Haste Not* with three pegs and a rather bold lasso—*The Horror*.

Nothing new has appeared on Dow Crag, but *Nimrod* was done for the fourth time by D. Berry. *Sidewalk* had third and fourth ascents by Austin and Roper and by D. Miller; and both climbs appear to be similar in standard to *Surplomb*, on the Grochan.

Boysen removed his peg from *Hiraeth*, and both parties completing it since say it is harder than *Extol*. Boysen also made a very hard route between the two, finishing up *Extol*. On the whole, Dove Crag seems to be becoming very popular, *Dovedale Groove* at least having had four or five ascents. This is possibly, because of the higher cliffs, it dries relatively quickly. Still in the Eastern Fells, *The Meddler*, Raven Crag (Thirlmere), has been found very hard by Cramm and Toole.

In the Buttermere area, the hardest route on Eagle Crag now follows a magnificent line between *Fifth Avenue* and *Eagle Front*. It will probably be called *Carnival*, but the original party (Roper, Soper and Austin) have not yet agreed on the name. Nevertheless it has already been repeated three times. *Psycho*, on High Crag, has been done free and the peg removed, and this welcome trend to purism has meant several free ascents of *High Crag Buttress*, a fine H.V.S., harder than previously reported.

The biggest discovery, and best in Borrowdale, is L. Brown's *Praying Mantis* on Goat Crag, already with over a dozen ascents. Nunn and Woolcock made a good route, *Daedalus*, on Eagle Crag (Langstrath), and *Post Mortem* was climbed at least half a dozen times in the year. Nunn also took the corner and traverse line right of *Fallon Wall* on Gillercombe Buttress, and these and the numerous other climbs discovered in Borrowdale will soon appear in the guide-book on which he is working.

OUTCROPS (1965)

(a) Gritstone

Although it is true that gritstone climbing is at the stage when new routes are difficult to find and even harder to do, it is not true that devel-

opment has stopped. Indeed, even since the apparently exhaustive Sheffield-Stanage guide was published, new lines have been found there. For instance, A. Clarke has led *Queersville* (V.S.) and *Yosemite Wall* (H.V.S.) on the blank section between *Hollybush Crack* and *Leaning Buttress Gully*. Another of his routes is the V.S. *Eliminator*, following the arête right of *Black Hawk Bastion*.

Volume 2 of the gritstone guides appeared half way through the year, dealing with the Saddleworth-Chew valley area, and perhaps the description of the Den Lane Quarry routes is the best part of it. The many new climbs recorded on Standing Stones and Ravenstones make them more worthy of visits than hitherto, and both here and at the impressive Dovestones Quarries most of the new routes have been found by the Rimmon Club. Charnel Stones is a relatively newly discovered edge with some fine climbs.

The Sheffield-Froggatt guide should be out any time now, to be followed closely by Chatsworth-Cromford. E. Marshall has made one or two more routes on Gardom's Edge, and some harder lines on Birchens have been led. D. Burgess and 'Nat' Allen have concentrated on Chatsworth, making it a fine edge for the tiger, but still with Whillans' *Sentinel Crack* as one of the hardest on grit.

Nunn has recorded over 120 routes in the Downfall ravine, but none to date on Dove Crag, the overhanging mass north of the Downfall itself. The North Edge has also received a lot of attention from Alpha and M.U.M.C. climbers, and now ranks among the better edges of the Peak. Some of the routes here date from 1960-61 when the late Graham West, M. Baxter and others of the Manchester Gritstone Club discovered *Brothers' Eliminate* (H.V.S.), *Little Boy Blue* (H.V.S.), *Pot Belly* (X.S.) and *Exodus* (V.S.), to list only a few. Recent additions are *Trojan* (H.V.S.—M. Simpkin), *Legacy* (H.V.S.—Nunn) and *Mustard Wall* (X.S.—Baxter). This position of maturity as a climbing ground, in which Kinderscout now finds itself, means there are few who will not meet their match on its many crags, and an expedition to include a route on them all is a major undertaking.

In Yorkshire, *Wall of Horrors* (Almscliffe) has been repeated and a new crag, Hawkcliffe, discovered near Keighley. It is dirty and overgrown, but has a few good routes and scope for more. *Squirrel Crack*, thin and very impressive, by J. Fullalove, is the best to date, up the middle of the biggest buttress. Another find is a small crag in Wensleydale, giving several pleasant routes.

J. Brown's two routes at Crookrise have been repeated, *Small Brown* for the first time by D. Berry. Austin led the fine crack under the cross at Rylstone, *Monument Crack*, just H.V.S. Guisecliffe has been thoroughly 'gone over'. Amongst the best of the many new routes is *The Creation* (X.S.), taking the big impending crack in the quarry at the left

hand end (Tony Barley). *Agrippa* (H.V.S.) and *North Wall Eliminate* (V.S.) are also very worth while. At Brimham, Clay has climbed *The Lecher*, the overhanging face left of *Minion's Way* and harder than *The Beatnick*. Clegg led the overhanging crack right of *Snuffer*; and though the guide-book is complete to this area, it is not yet at the printers.

(b) *Limestone*

Progress on this widespread rock is great, both in discovery and in technique. Not only fine new free climbs of high standard are found, but many one time peg routes have been climbed more or less free. The current crop of artificial climbs is very impressive and of great difficulty, and the length of most of the routes compares favourably with many in Wales and the Lakes.

Starting in the north, at Malham, a few of the best are *Wombat* (90 ft., H.V.S.) taking a very steep and strenuous line above *East Wall Route*, *Carnage* (160 ft., H.V.S., above *The Macabre*) and, less exacting, the 120 ft. V.S. *Dalesman*, following the flake crack right of *Hangover*. One of the finest routes here is still the *Girdle* of the right wing, done in 1963 by Sumner and Sales with considerable aid. It has now been climbed in the opposite direction without any pegs, and yields 600 ft. of V.S. climbing in about half a dozen pitches. Nothing new at Goredale is of tremendous merit, but the arête on the right above the waterfall has yielded an artificial climb. *Light* has been given a different peg finish over the double overhang, and the wall left of *Darkness* gave a fine open climb, 130 ft. (V.S.), aptly named *Sunshine*. Finally here, the steep buttress 200 ft. to the left of *Face Route* has been opened up, giving several interesting pitches.

Kilnsey, with its tremendous roof and impending wall, is certainly one of the most imposing cliffs in the country, and it has now been provided with a *Super-Direttissima*, even more spectacular than the original route. It starts left of the 'ordinary' climb and goes straight up to the roof and across it at its widest part. The climb is 200 ft., A3, and involves the use of nine bolts on the 40 ft. roof. Two of the big grooves right of the main overhang have also been done—*Camelot* (120 ft., V.S.) and *Ballas* (130 ft., A3). On the Central Buttress *Trauma Traverse* (340 ft., V.S. and A1) takes a really fine natural traverse line from *Central Wall* to *The Dièdre*, up which it finishes (the A1 section). In Dibb Scar the most notable addition is a climb crossing its roof at its widest; this is *Hexameron* (100 ft., A2) just right of *Central Wall*.

In the Peak, the voracious, locust-like approach to the search for lines has been transferred from grit to limestone. This guide-book work has led to a fantastic number of new routes and the discovery of one or two 'new' cliffs. One of these is Great Rocks Quarry, where over half a

dozen routes of V.S. and above have been done. *Ourobouros* (200 ft., V.S.), *Scaramanga* (150 ft., H.V.S.) and *Samedi* (150 ft., H.V.S. and A1) are three of the best, but *Double O*, which takes a big overhang with five pegs (100 ft., S. and A3), looks really loose. Most of the climbs, except this, have been found by the Rimmon M.C., and they provide interest for all weathers including delicate free and entertaining artificial climbs suitable for the shortest of wet winter days.

The Sheffield Cioch Club completed an A3 climb up the black prow of *Plum Buttress*, now graded A2. Again on this buttress, Dearman's *Sir Plum* traverses above the biggest overhang in Derbyshire (180 ft., V.S.) from right to left. Still in Cheedale, on Chee Tor the Alpha and Rimmon Clubs, including Howard, Woolcock, Nunn and Rowland, have made a number of routes all around V.S. and A1 and about 70 ft. high. The sombre gloom of the gorge gives an atmosphere out of proportion to their length to climbs like *Clive's Route*, *Leering Wall*, *The Chopper*, *Great Central Route*, *Hurgiani*, *Oblomov* and *Korablin*. The best free climb on the tor is its girdle, by Jackson and Atkinson, with only three pegs for aid, which I mentioned last year.

On the left bank, between the two railway bridges, are three A3 climbs on obvious overhanging crags: *The Storm*, *Santiano* and *The Big Splash*. These are Rimmon routes, and the last starts from a belay on stepping stones and projects 10 ft. over the river. At the lower end of Cheedale, Strawberry Rocks, a quarry hidden behind trees about a quarter of a mile up the track from Millers Dale station, gives ten or twelve V.S. routes found by the Cioch Club.

Raven Tor's *Mecca* is now considered A2, but Dearman's *Prow* and its *Direct Start* are A3 and will take a skilled party 5½–6 hours. Further along the river we come to Water cum Jolly Dale and on the left bank *Ardenne* (A3) and *Battle of the Bulge* (A2) take the prow left of *Dead Tree Groove*. *Christmas Crack* is a V.S. on its right, whilst on the right bank Dearman and R. D. Brown have made routes up the fearsome black buttress by the lake beyond the Cornice. They are *Moat Wall* and *Pirhana Wall* (both V.S. and A2, 100 ft.).

Ravensdale now has many fine climbs, recent ascents being the wall between *Concluser* and *Deluser* (W. White and E. Marshall) at V.S., as is the groove between *Mealybugs* and *Mephistopheles* (Dearman). The right hand wall gave a two-pitch V.S. route, *Enigma*, to N. Crowther before he left for Canada. Stoney Middleton now rivals Stanage in popularity, queueing often being necessary for the classics. It now boasts limestone's only X.S., *The Hex*, one of many hard climbs around Brown Corner, just off the Eyam road. On the central area of the crag J. Street and his companions have produced many hard free climbs, including *Double Scotch*, *Gethsemane*, *Dead Banana Crack*, *Chaos* and *Alcasan* (all H.V.S.). Since the guide, the number of climbs here has been trebled,



Photo: C. J. S. Bonington]

CHEDDAR: MAIN WALL. ROUTES INDICATED (RIGHT TO LEFT): SCEPTRE, SCEPTRE DIRECT, CORONATION STREET.

- (a) Only artificial move on Coronation Street.
- (b) Move round seemingly detached block, first climbed free by R. Baillie.

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others of note being *Aquilan* (H.V.S., one peg, 150 ft.), *Spiron* (85 ft., V.S.), *Evasor* and *Swan Song* by Dearman, R. D. Brown and other S.U.M.C. climbers.

Rather less has been done in south Derbyshire, where pinnacles and separate crags are the form rather than the escarpments of the north. C. Jackson climbed High Tor from the *Bastion Wall* area by a series of traverses, pendules and some free climbing to the top of *Fortress Wall*. There have been some additions at Wildcat, Willersley and in Bradford Dale, Lathkill Dale and Earl Sterndale, besides some discoveries around Castleton. In Dovedale, at Tissington Spires, one of the best routes is *John Peel* (H.V.S.), and another fine one is *Snakes Alive*, by the North Staffordshire M.C. The Summit M.C. made *Campanile* (H.S.) and *Silicon* (V.S.), both very good climbs, and higher up the dale *Overhanging Buttress* (H.S.), *The Beak* (H.S.) and *Bailey Buttress* (H.V.S.) are other outstanding climbs with fine situation.

The routes in the Manifold valley are generally longer. Besides *The Thorn* and *Ivy Gash* on Beeston Tor, *Beeston Eliminate* (185 ft., H.V.S.) and *Lynx Wall* (170 ft., S.) make it a very useful cliff, with several other climbs. Thor's Cave *West Window Groove*, though an old climb (J. Brown) is still an exciting exercise in bridging and Ossams Crag, further north, boasts *The Cummerbund* (V.S., 280 ft.), a sort of girdle following a scar.

It is not too surprising that limestone climbing has developed to this state in a relatively short time, as its potential had been ignored for many years, local climbers concentrating on gritstone and moorland walking (ideal training for deep soft snow!). The early attempts with pegs and aid soon showed the free possibilities, and now two guide-books are in preparation. The first, to the northern area, should be published in 1967.

Before leaving limestone, we must look at Cheddar, which has some of the best and longest climbs on the rock in Britain. Certainly *Coronation Street*, the 'last great problem' of the south-west is a magnificent 400 ft. route. Bonington and Cleare first attempted it in January, but were turned back by gathering dark. A fortnight later Bonington and Greenbank abseiled into the highest point, reached and traversed round an apparently detached rock bulge, then up a clean-cut groove and a smooth, delicate slab to the top. Nine pegs were used, two for aid, and the ascent was televised by T.W.W. Several more routes were done after the show. One of these was a fine artificial route by C. Jones to the left of *Coronation Street*. Another went up the clean buttress on the opposite side of the valley, and a third up the overhanging face higher up the gorge.

IRELAND (1964-65)

Sean Rothery reports that nothing of significance has been done.

SCOTLAND (1964)

At last the first winter traverse of the main Coolin ridge has been done. It took two days and afterwards Patey described it as the greatest single adventure in British mountaineering; and taking into account the difficulties and the necessity to take the opportunity when conditions are right (rarely), one must agree. Routes are still to be found on Sron na Ciche; first, on the East Buttress, *Shangri La* (S.) and *The Searcher*, by Clough and Nicholls, exploit some very attractive rock. On the West Buttress, Harwood and Thomas made a V.S. Direct Finish to *Diamond Slab*. The *Yellow Groove* (H.S.) continuation to *Sunset Slab*, by Clough, Battle and Fein, on Sgurr Sgumain is a useful addition and yet another route has been made on the South face of the Inaccessible Pinnacle, *Varicose*, by Harwood. The 1,200 ft. *Goliath Buttress* on Sgurr a Mhadaidh, done by Harwood and Robbins, sounds a good natural line, is V.S. and took two days.

In Arran, the Rosa Slabs of Goatfell have yielded more routes. *Gutter-snipe* (500 ft., V.S.) goes up the belt of slabs between *Evening Slab* and *Zig-zag*. It provides a logical sequel to *Angel's Pavement* and *Fool's Causeway*, and was done by G. Anderson and McKeith. The three climbs mentioned are on the cleanest rock and give the best climbing, but yet another route was done by Bailey and Whyte called *Trundle* (H.S.). On the South Slabs *Dog Leg* (V.S.; Brumfitt and McKeith) and *Pussyfoot* (V.S.; Bathgate and Renny) were both made on the same day. Skidmore, Crawford and Madden climbed *The Recess*, a new start to *Anvil* on the Rosa Pinnacle, and the first pitch of *Ben Nuis Chimney* has been done without aid.

On the Ben, *King Kong*, a complicated route up Carn Dearg Buttress by Robertson, Harper and J. Graham is very serious and sustained besides being of great severity (cf. *The Bat*). *Minus Three Gully* was climbed for the first time in 'summer' by J. R. Marshall and Ritchie. They describe the occasion as 'the mostest wettest week-end of the summer', and Clough led a direct start to the left hand route of *Minus Two Buttress*. Robertson and Knight made the fifth (winter) ascent of *Point Five Gully* in 10½ hours; and the fourth, fifth and sixth ascents of *Zero Gully* were achieved by Bathgate and McEarchan, MacFarlane and Colvin, and G. Oliver (F. & R.C.C.). New winter ascents were *Mourning Slab* by Bathgate and Knight (this follows a great cataract of ice known as 'The Curtain', which gave very hard climbing). The *Green Hollows Route* on the North-east Buttress was done by J. R. Marshall and Moriarty, and Marshall, R. Campbell and Holt climbed the East Flank of *Tower Ridge* in seven hours.

Fairly few new routes in the Northern Highlands this year include one each on Stac Polly and Ben Klibreck; but *Fishmonger*, a 750 ft. S. on

Foinaven, follows a natural line up a fault directly up the cliff to the summit of Lord Reay's Seat. It is a fine climb, made by W. D. Fraser and P. N. L. Tranter.

A spate of first winter ascents in the Cairngorms includes *Djibangi* and *Talisman* (both grade V) by McCartney and Barclay, and Grassick and Light, both on Ben Macdhui. The *Great Rift, Slab and Groove* and *Helicon Rib* (Braeriach) were rather easier, and of the summer routes *Billabong* (450 ft., H.S.), a Direct Start to *Waterkelpie Wall* and *Dinosaur* (1,200 ft., V.S.) on Creag an Dubh Loch were climbed by Etchachan Club members. The last mentioned takes the 'magnificent sweep of polished slabs interrupted by overhangs' between *Labyrinth Edge* and *Theseus Grooves*.

Winter ascents in Glencoe include *The Screen*, up the ice-fall beneath the middle ledge on the right of No. 3 Gully, by Bathgate and Brumfitt. *McLay's Gully* and *McLaren's Chimney* on Creag Tarsuinn in Arrochar were both climbed by Skidmore, Crawford and Madden, the first in ice and snow and the second involving four pitches of difficult ice.