

Notes 1971 The British Isles

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The Lake District

The availability of details relating to new climbs is here, as elsewhere, limited by secrecy. Each area has devotees, who jealously guard developments from would-be 'pirates'. None the less, some notable news items have slipped through the net.

Three girdle traverses of important crags have been made, each has considerable merit. They are of Central Buttress, Scafell, an overlooked 'plum'; Engineer's Slabs on Great Gable and Dove Crag. In Eskdale, Heron Crag has another route between *Bellerophon* and *Spec Crack*, and outlying crags in Ennerdale have also received attention. The Warnscale face of Haystacks in Buttermere is being systematically scoured by Austin, Roper and others; a number of routes have been unearthed but details are not forthcoming.

Langdale, as popular as ever, has *Ragman's Trumpet*, and an intricate series of eliminates on *Cascade* for Pavey Ark. Yet another even harder eliminate was done on White Ghyll when Matheson reduced much of the aid on his own *Paladin*. Austin and Valentine also added an independent finish to *Haste Not Direct*.

At St Bees Head, guide-book writers Young and Burbage report only a few additions this year, in contrast to the past two seasons. However, during the course of repeat ascents they have eliminated substantial quantities of apparently unjustified aid.

The Pennine Outcrops

New routes continue to be made at a prodigious rate, with an increasingly high proportion in the upper grades.

Natural gritstone had little to offer, except by resort to methods previously regarded with suspicion. A route left of the *Unconquerable Cracks* at Stanage, another at Higgarr Tor and a third at the Roches undoubtedly demand respect. The yield from quarried grit is more encouraging. Hipley Quarries at Stancliff near Rowsley and Burycliffe near Elton provide a few routes. At Stanton Moor and Rivelin Quarries over twenty lines have been climbed. Quarries at Lawrence Field and Dovestones provide good routes, and at Bollington several 100-ft climbs have been unearthed. Rockfall scars on Kinder have also received attention.

Limestone in the Manifold valley and Dovedale has been scoured. A few good low-grade climbs have been found, but the vast majority are in higher categories. Dovedale is now comparable with Borrowdale or the north side of the Llanberis Pass so far as the number of routes is concerned. Many prospectors have been competing for virgin rock, leading inevitably to conflicting first ascent claims. Willersley near Matlock has two worthy additions, but even more significant are three routes at High Tor—*Weezy Works* and *The Burning Icicle* are both impressive, and the last of the last great problems (for the moment) has been conquered, a complete girdle traverse of both wings of the crag.

Climbs have also been made at Great Rocks Dale Quarry, Chee valley, Ravensdale and of course, Stoney Middleton. Some of the routes are of the highest calibre, providing both length and difficulty, with Proctor and Jackson prominent in the ranks of first ascensionists; reputations will undoubtedly be quick to materialise.

Here in the Peak, as elsewhere, ethics are being increasingly scrutinised, particularly when artificial routes are climbed 'free'. Ancient pegs and other relics eventually fail and cannot be replaced by a free climber very close to the ultimate limit of his abilities. The route may thus be rendered 'unclimbable'. The techniques of methodically eliminating aid from a route by a succession of ascents, demands at least honesty. A stranger is led to believe that these ascents were achieved by conventional means. He may justly be impressed by the ability of the residents, but how unfortunate if his trust and respect were marred by deceit and falseness.

Wales—North Wales

The north continues to provide the bulk of the interest, with the big established cliffs featuring well, as we are learning to expect.

Ten routes of varied merit have been added to Clogwyn du'r Arddu's impressive total, thus rendering *The Black Cliff*, itself a contributory factor in this upsurge of interest, out of date. Significantly, well-seasoned performers of the highest calibre were responsible, Boysen, Holliwell, Evans and Alcock.

The Anglesey sea cliffs are increasingly popular as reputations for excellence take precedence over those for unabated horror. Knowledgeable hard men continue to glean new climbs with a remarkable degree of independence, usually more demanding and steeper than last year's desperate problems which are frequently relegated to the 'trade' category.

On Llech Ddu, Holliwell and Whybrow girdled the Central Wall. It is highly regarded. Boysen and Alcock contributed no less than four hard routes to Cwm Idwal's Suicide Wall in a weekend. The Devil's Kitchen Cliffs again received attention from Hipkiss, Leppart and others, whilst the much tried *Pocket Wall* right of the Idwal Slabs fell to Dave Peers. He has also made climbs on Clogwyn Du and Pinnacle Crag of Cwm Cwyion.

Earlier in the year Wyville and Mossman forced an impressive line through the overhangs of Carreg Hyll Drem. A big groove line on Craig Cwm Dulyn was picked off by Evans and Wyville while Mike and Judy Yates added a VS to Moel Hebog.

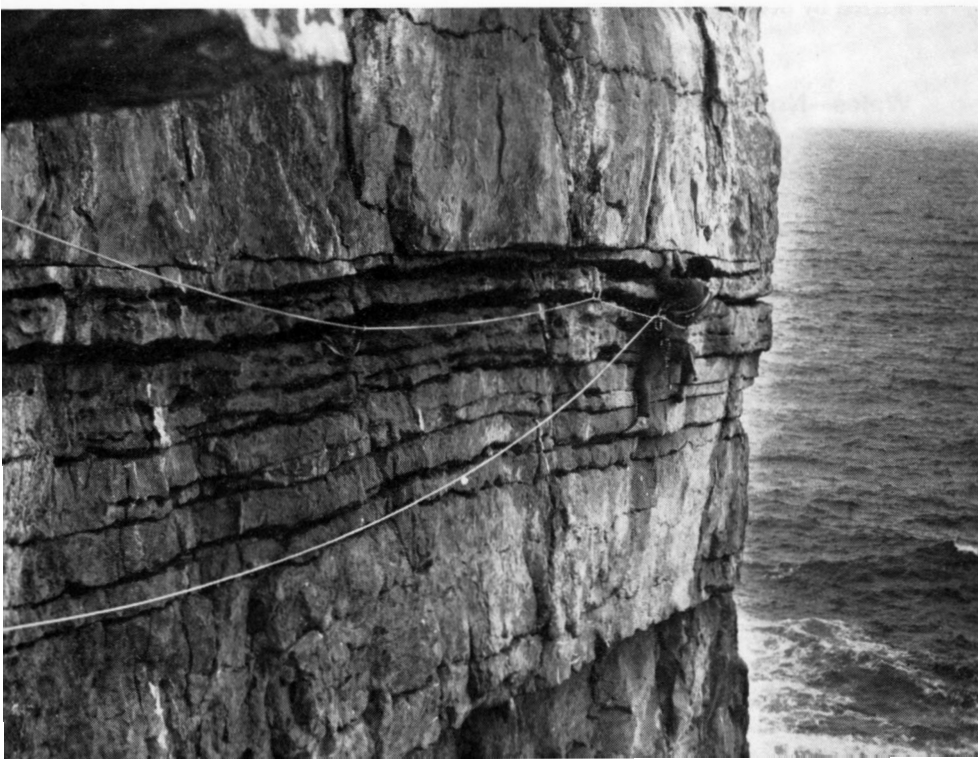
Central Wales

The feverish activity of the past two years appears to have abated with comparatively little to report. Publication of John Sumner's long awaited guide-book to the area now seems imminent. Five short climbs have been made on a recently discovered crag, Craig-y-Geifr at the north end of Fawddwy-Benllyn ridge. Another six routes have been put up on Craig Cowarch, including a notable groove on North Buttress by Jarvis. The most outstanding achievement in this area is *The Overlap*, a hard route by Sumner and party on the Far South Buttress.

South Wales

Here again, a slackening of pace is evident, although the number of new climbs is still high. Twenty routes had been made on the newly discovered limestone cliffs at Ogmore-by-Sea near Bridgend by mid-July, Horsfield and

99 *Hearts of Darkness, Mowing Ward, Pembrokeshire.* Photo: J. Perrin



Watkin being the principal originators. The major sea cliffs of the area in Pembrokeshire saw comparatively little activity, but Perrin and Greenland did add four short climbs to the south face of Mowing Word, and two major lines on the west face. *Hearts of Darkness*, a traverse of the steep central area, is also impressive.

Ireland

Luggala proved to be the centre of activity, when the conscientious gardening of last year paid handsome dividends. Four routes were climbed of varying standard, with Christie Rice featuring on three of them. *Gannets* is a particularly fierce route, surmounting an overhang capping a groove. At Glendalough he was also involved in ascents of *Rock Island Line* and *Mermaid*.

Fair Head received comparatively little attention this year, but three routes were made, all in the upper grades. Poisoned Glen in Donegal has been worked on by the English—Bonington, Estcourt, Drasdo and others. Four new climbs were made on Bearnas Buttress. Maxfield and Rittman were also busy on the right hand side of the Castle.

Unfortunately, work on the guide-book front has been minimal. However, the Donegal, Wicklow (Glendalough and Luggala) and Mourne areas are at manuscript stage.

Scotland

To summarise the events that take place over such a wide area and involve so many people is impossible. Here, only comparatively few isolated instances can be dealt with. At best they serve to indicate current trends in the most important of our climbing areas.

Creag an Dubh-Loch in the Cairngorms has two new climbs. *The Om* by Lang and Littleford and another by Bower and Ingram. Across the Glen on Eagle Rock another line was discovered right of the waterfall. Cliffs further north also received attention, with a new route on Etchachan and two more on Hell's Lum Crag. And the most notable event for the area was the 1000-ft *Haystack* on Shelter Stone which takes a very bold line.

Glen Coe had a relatively quiet year. A hard line was made on the north face of Aonach Dubh right of *Yo-yo*. As ever, the Etive Slabs were popular. Corrington and Nicolson straightened out the *Big Ride* and Stein and Crockett climbed an eliminate beside *Long Reach*.

On Ben Nevis, Corrington and Nicolson triumphed again with *Cowslip*, a long standing problem. The Central Trident Buttress provides *Giraffe* and in the vicinity of Castle Ridge another fierce route was climbed—*Plastic Man*. Details of several other routes made hereabouts are not available. Soloing came into vogue with *Centurion* by Norris Muir being the most notable ascent.



100 *Doldrum, Fair Head*. Photo:
P. McDermott



101 *Alan Fyffe on Astronomy, Ben
Nevis*. Photo: H. MacInnes

Creag Dubh at Newtonmore is one of Scotland's very few roadside crags. Shields was responsible for three routes here and Crockett put up another two. Soloing also made its mark, the most outstanding example being Nicolson's ascent of *Inbred*.

In the Applecross area of the north-west a number of climbs were made by the staff at the West Highlands School of Adventure, and on Quinag South face by MacInnes and a variety of partners. Crawford and Skidmore did a very hard line on the Meadow Face of Beinn Tarsuinn – Arran and another even harder, *Moriarty*, was added to Mainreachan Buttress by Boysen and Burke.

Doug Scott and Guy Lee climbed *Sidewinder* (A5, HVS) said to be considerably harder than Scott's original route at Strone Ulladale. Ward Drummond's epic ascent of the St John's Head cliffs on Hoy last year took six days. Bivouacs were precarious and the route provides 1200 ft of very serious climbing on one of the most inaccessible crags in the British Isles.

Winter

In spite of the poor conditions, there were some very impressive performances. The astonishing 2½ hour ascent of Point Five Gully by Cunningham and March well illustrates the effectiveness of front pointing and curved picks in the hands of competent mountaineers. March, this time in the company of John Hart, made the first ascent of Raeburn's Buttress on Shelter Stone. It proved to be easier than expected. He also found two grade III's on Stag Rocks, close by. Hell's Lum Crag provided Spence and Docherty with a good grade IV.

Aonach Dubh in Glencoe, provided Fyffe, Spence and MacInnes with routes the most outstanding of which was *Evening Citizen* by the latter two. Several routes were made on Buachaille Etive, and in the Lost Valley also.

Most of the activity on Ben Nevis took place during a brief spell of good conditions in March. The Fyffe/Spence/MacInnes combine was responsible for a very fine grade V following the approximate line of *Astronomy*. The much sought after Gardyloo Buttress at long last had repeat ascents by Geddes and Rayner, then Spence and party.

Apart from the notable ascents mentioned above, there were several epic retreats from attempts on very hard new lines. A slight change of emphasis can be detected, a move away from the traditions of the gullies to the steep mixed routes of the buttresses.

I have relied heavily upon correspondents in various parts of the British Isles for the details from which these notes are compiled. I am indebted to: Allen Fyffe, Tim Lewis, Joss Lynam, Hamish MacInnes, Paul Nunn, Jim Perrin, John Sumner, Ken Wilson, Bill Young and an even greater number of indirect contributors.

NEW GUIDE-BOOKS

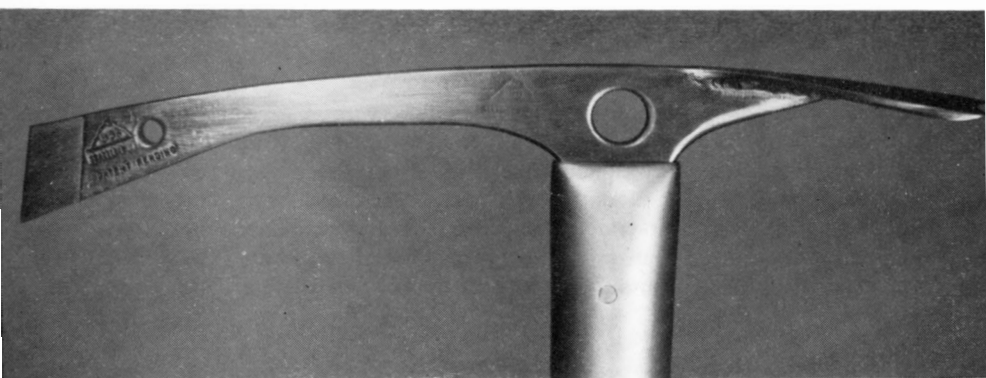
Rock Climbing in the British Isles 1894-1970, A bibliography of Guide-books, by George Bridge (West Col Productions, £0.90).

South Devon Climber's Guide, by P. Littlejohn (West Col Productions, £1.90).

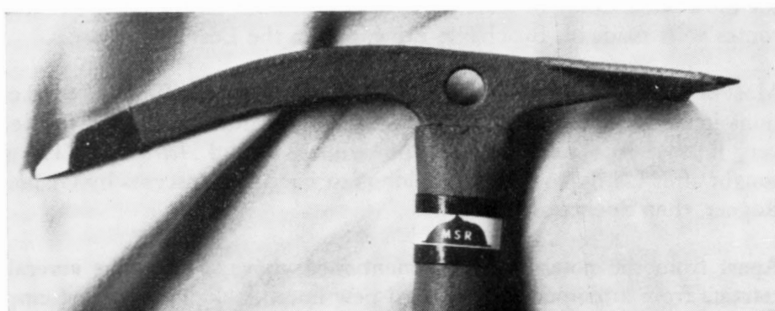
The Islands of Scotland, by N. Tennant (Scottish Mountaineering Trust, £2.50).

Climbers' Guide to the Cairngorms Area, Vol. V: Creag an Dubh Loch, Glen Clova, by A. Fyffe (West Col Productions, £1.30).

Scottish Climbs, by Hamish MacInnes (Constable, 2 vols, £1.75 each). Brief descriptions of selected climbs in the style favoured by S.M.C. guide-books. Vol. 1 deals with south and west, Vol. 2, with north-east. These are not books for the field, as no one will wish to carry with him a series of descriptions of such wide areas, but an interesting addition to the book-case from the pen of an expert.



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