

graphs, then glissaded joyfully down the snow. Within an hour we were on grass and soon amongst azaleas and dwarf pines. By noon we were lunching at Berthaholi Himal Base Camp site, originally named Juniper Camp by Dr Longstaff on his epic climb of Trisul from the E in 1907. For the first time in 4 days we found litter and knew that our private world was behind us.

Our return to Joshimath was down the well-trodden path of the Rishi Ganga and we camped that night at Deodi. Next day we passed through Dibrugetha meeting some 80 porters en route to carry out the American party on Nanda Devi. They stared in amazed disbelief when they heard we had come from the Nanda Kini valley, but our satisfaction soon evaporated as it began to rain heavily. We climbed the interminable slope to Dharansi and pushed on through dense cloud to Lata Harak, where the weather relented and we pitched our 2 tents in a golden haze. Before we descended to Lata next morning, we looked back across the Rishi Ganga and were amazed to see the route from Trisul to our third col stretched across the skyline, dwarfed by distance and rather deflating after our efforts. These were not yet finished, for the last bus of the day swept past us at Reni without an inch of room—an accurate statement for those who know the capacity of Indian buses. So apart from a short ‘hitch’ to Tapoban from an Indian Army lorry, we tramped the last 15 miles to Joshimath in the dark. Here we sealed our return to civilization by being sucked into the crowd leaving the late show at the garrison cinema. With a sense of the ridiculous, we exchanged imaginary comments on the film, and were rewarded by stunned silence from the cinema goers: or perhaps it was just our bedraggled appearance.

Postscript

An afternoon spent in the Alpine Club library after my return proved that we had retraced only the last part of Shipton's route out from the Nanda Devi Sanctuary. He had climbed the Ronti Glacier up a side valley direct from Reni, so the latter part of our journey across the W flank of Berthaholi Himal was, presumably, a first crossing to the Rishi Ganga. A fortuitous error on our part.

References

- 1 ‘Survey in the Nanda Devi District’ E. E. Shipton (Read before the AC on 9 March 1937).
- 2 *Ascent of Nanda Devi* H. W. Tilman p 49.
- 3 *Shikar Magazine* India January 1977 issue.

Memories 1

To Silver Turn'd

Francis Keenlyside

Here are no historic deeds, no hair-breadth escapes, but simple emotion recollected in tranquillity; such a tide, you may think, as moving seems asleep. First, I shall recall wartime climbing in Britain; few of us could then be active, fewer are left and memories fade. Then I shall dwell a little on 2 holidays in Italy 20 years ago. At times I may lapse into mere lists of names, for which my excuse must be that companions on a climb are part of the texture of that climb.

Nowadays if you want to start climbing you go to school at your own or the County Council's expense. In pre-war days you depended on relatives or friends. From a schoolboy I had walked up pinewood paths to tourist viewpoints in the Alps, through the Black Forest, along the Tyrol-Bavarian border and, later, in Wales. Unfortunately OUMC and I missed each other and it took me years to get on a rope. A solitary student, guide-book in hand, I scrambled up everything described as Easy, Moderate and even Moderately Difficult, a slow but solid introduction. Not until 1939, through the good offices of a cousin, I hitched myself to one of Bryan Dickson's Easter parties at Capel and, expecting the Alps soon to be closed, I dashed to Switzerland and climbed 4 or 5 easy peaks with guides.

Within a month the Alps were closed to us and climbing in England was hampered by pressure of work and difficulty of travel; the few climbers I knew were also busy and scattered. At Easter 1940, just before the balloon went up, I managed 5 days in the Lakes with the WTA, which in those days did very much what the climbing schools do now. After that I felt less shy and boldly booked myself into PyG. Arrived at Betws I was struck by a splendid figure disembarking, quite unruffled and unstained by the squalor from which we had emerged. This proved to be Edward Cullinan. Soon picked up by Arthur Lockwood, we joined forces on Lliwedd after breakfast. In the evening we found Ernest Grosvenor, a far more experienced climber than either of us, and we were delighted to join him. Illness had kept him from climbing for some years and, quite unnecessarily, he asked us to treat him gently on his return to the hills. We climbed on Tryfan, Idwal Slabs, Holly Tree Wall and, on our last day, Route II in the rain. That evening Ernest suggested that he propose me for the Climbers' Club and Leslie Shadbolt agreed to second me. I felt I had almost arrived.

Thereafter, until 1946, most of my climbing was based on Helyg, though meets of the Club Dickson were generally at Dungeon Ghyll. Brackenclouse, RLH and PyG were also visited and once John Barford, Charles Warren, David Brown and I stayed at the historic but fast fading Gorffwysfa. At Helyg I made new friends, particularly the remarkable trio of Barford, Nully Kretschmer and Allan Pullinger who at that time shared a flat in Kensington and who, with Bryan Donkin and Jack Longland under the guidance of elder statesmen like Grosvenor, Geoffrey Bartrum and Shadbolt, ran the Climbers' Club affairs in London. Before long I joined these standard-bearers on the Committee, later succeeding Barford as Secretary and David Cox as Editor.

The restraints on climbing in wartime England lent it an atmosphere of its own. Rationing was not much of a difficulty because the claws of the Ministry of Food were much less sharp in rural areas like North Wales. As the war went on it became difficult or impossible to replace climbing gear but we used much less of this than is now customary. The real difficulty was travel. It wasn't, as the poster insistently asked 'Is your journey really necessary?' but 'Can you really make it?'. There was no petrol for private use, so all longer journeys had to be made by train and shorter ones by bicycle. The 10.50 from Euston on a Friday night became a recurrent adventure; it was always crowded and a seat improbable; it was seldom punctual, often resting during periods of air-raid alert, so that a connection at Crewe was speculative. The return journey to London was similar, except that delay was desirable so that the tubes should be running by the time the train reached Euston. On one occasion it arrived punctually about 3am; laden with rucksack and rope, dressed like a tramp, I set out to walk to Berkeley Square through the deserted and

darkened streets. A policeman was properly inquisitive, for any unlikely character was believed to be an enemy parachutist; it was difficult to convince him that I was a respectable civil servant walking to work. Some notes from my log may recall the ambience: 'Crewe to Chester in the guard's van with 17 men, 1 woman, 6 calves, 2 perambulators, crates of pigeons and much miscellaneous baggage': 'Over 500 wartime miles for 1½ hours climbing': 'train unheated, fog froze on the windows': 'Getting home found handles torn from windows and some perforated by splinters': 'Greenwood couldn't come, house destroyed': 'Dick couldn't come, leave stopped': 'after five years none of us had anything left but line': 'there were, allegedly, seven passengers asleep in the W.C.'. Of course taking a bicycle by train added to the difficulties and riding it in the rain, uphill from Betws to Helyg, with one rucksack on the carrier and another on your back, was uncomfortable.

On the other hand, once arrived, there was the great compensation that the hills were beautifully free of humanity, except when one ran into tactical exercises with live ammunition which made deviations desirable. Sometimes, too, an area was marked 'Danger; mines'.

After Colin Kirkus was killed, Menlove Edwards was undisputed king of climbing in Wales. Much of Menlove can be found in Noyce and Sutton: *Samson*. I said most of what I had to say about this very remarkable man in a review of this book (*AJ* 65 253), but only once did I go climbing with him. He, Nully and I travelled up from Euston and found Allan Pullinger already established in Helyg. I feared I was going to be guard's van in exploration of some steep and rotten crag, receiving on my patient head all the mud and stone excavated above. Nothing of the sort happened. The first day Nully led some climbs in Idwal; the second day I found myself alone with Menlove below Craig yr Ysfa and it was anticlimax when he requested me to lead him up Staircase. He had been almost ubiquitous in Wales, mopping up climbs like blotting paper. Once Tony Worssam and I returned to Helyg pleased with ourselves about a nice 'new' climb on Creigiau Gleision the Younger, but research in the Helyg log revealed that, like countless others, we had been forestalled by Menlove who had done Anvil Cracks 13 years earlier.

By 1946 we could escape to the Alps. With his usual thoroughness, Barford organized Peter Nock, Michael Ward and me for a trip to the Bregaglia. As a preliminary he took me up for a week-end at RLH in the hope of getting me into some sort of training. On the Saturday we climbed Tower Buttress and Pinnacle Face direct from Lord's Rake to Hopkinson's Cairn and from there via Bad Corner and Jones's Arête to Low Man; on Sunday we did Gimmer Crack and found our way back to London. Three weeks later the 4 of us set out from Victoria; the train across France to Basel was still wartime; Customs trouble caused John and Peter to miss the train to Zürich, where we paused to equip ourselves with crampons, karabiners etc. The reunited party slept at Maloja. It was marvellous just to be in the Alps.

The rest of the expedition is described in a couple of pages of Michael Ward's *In this Short Span* and he well captures the mood. On 2 points, however, his memory differs from my notes. Our first trip was not to the Forno but to the Albigna hut and it was the slog up from Cassaccia that I found killing with rucksack full of gear and provisions for 3 or 4 days; certainly I arrived a bad last. Michael mentions his astonishment at the abundant food, but this was only in contrast to Attlee's England. Rationing was still in force in Switzerland and our inadequate knowledge of Romansch or Italian led to an unfortunate misunderstanding; when we drew our cards we had the impression that they had to last for a fortnight, though in fact they

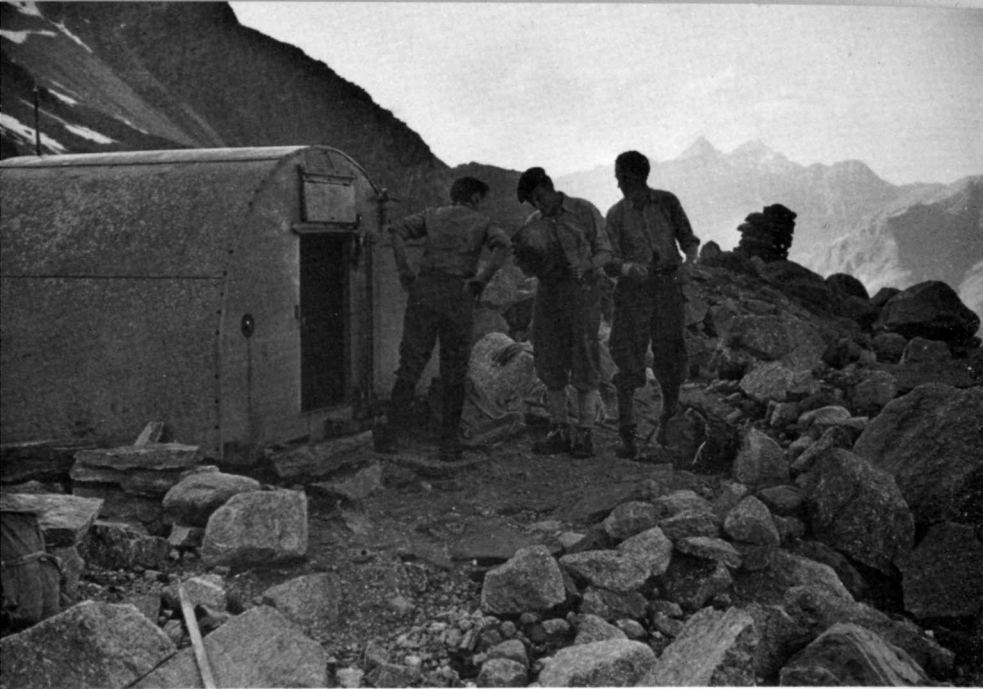
covered only a week, thus we were on half rations and always hungry. I had to go home after this fortnight and did not stay to share the more lavish food of the later period.

The climb I most enjoyed was the Ago di Sciora from the Sciora hut by the W face and descent over the Sciora di Dentro to the Bondasca glacier. This I did with Peter, the others did the Ago from the Albigna hut on the other side. While we sat on the point of the needle a golden eagle circled majestically only about 20ft away.

For the next decade I was annually in the Alps, usually with old companions from the British hills: David Brown, Dick Carpendale, Jane and Maurice Chidley, John Watson, Roy Beard, Emlyn Jones, Lynn Robertson, Frank Fitzgerald. In July, 1947, as I was coming down the Ferpècle glacier from the Dent Blanche, a man coming up informed me of John Barford's death by stone-fall below the Col de la Coste Rouge. A fortnight later, Nully Kretschmer with John Jenkins fell descending the Old Brenva. This double disaster affected the whole British climbing world; for me, John and Nully had been my keenest preceptors and dear friends.

The Alpine holiday was the centre of each year, so much so that a rained off fortnight in Grindelwald seemed to have taken a whole year out of my life. There were still frequent trips to Wales or the Lakes, but these were now usually family parties based on PyG or Dungeon Ghyll rather than Helyg. Very clear are memories of the Monte Rosa centenary celebrations on Zermatt, particularly of the multilingual oratory of our own and the Swiss representatives. (*AJ* 60 395). Two years later, at our own centenary meet, we again enjoyed most generous hospitality from our Swiss friends, particularly Alfred Zürcher (then our vice-president) and Dr Franz Seiler. (For these events see Peacocke and Beaumann, *AJ* 63 51.) After the splendid raclette party at the Riffelalp, Peter Lloyd, Basil and Terence Goodfellow and I set out across the Gorner glacier to the Gandegg, which was dirty and crowded. Leaving at 4.15 next morning we had a magnificent climb up the Triftjegrat, mostly on ice but with spells of snow wading. Middle age made both Basil and me very slow on the descent, we missed our way in woods in darkness and only reached Zermatt at 10pm, long after the others. A day or two later the same party set out from the Schonbiel aiming for the WNW face of the Dent d'Hérens, a Ryan-Lochmatter climb. Jim Gavin advised against the attempt as he had just returned from the face and 3in of snow had fallen while he was on it. On reaching the foot of the face we agreed with Gavin and went on to the Tiefenmattenjoch. Peter wanted to proceed up the ridge, descending from the Tête de Valpelline, but was fortunately vetoed; it soon began to snow and rained for the rest of the day. Basil counted over 700 steps cut on this abortive expedition.

The next year, July 1958, Basil, the Feddens and I set off from the Feddens' Kensington house at 5.15am in the invaluable Fedden Riley, and were in Rifugio Vittorio Sella the following evening. A day of rain and hail saw us on some minor summit; next day we reached bivacco fisso Martinotti; the swollen streams were unfordable and we had to make a long detour round the head of the valley to cross them on snow and ice. Returning to the bivacco with a load of water, I was surprised by a flash of flame from the door, the cooker had blown up and burned Basil's hand painfully. We were up at 3am, hoping for the Roccia Viva, but had to sit and listen to rain and thunder till at 2pm we disconsolately waded down. In these conditions Robin took us to Turin to inspect Baroque. I liked the Juvara staircase in the Madama and parts of the cathedral but the gem was Guarini's little church of San Lorenzo.



81 Bivouac Antoldi (This and next 3 photos: AC collection, B. R. Goodfellow)

The weather improved and from the Antoldi bivouac at the head of the Valeille we traversed Torre del Gran San Pietro; behind us stood 2 ibex silhouetted on a pinnacle, apparently enjoying the view. Next day, up at the Casolari del Herbetet, we were surrounded by a score of these magnificent animals who had complete trust in the protection of the National Park. The Garde Chasse resident at the Casolari kindly chased the chickens out of a shed where we spread a blanket on the straw and covered ourselves with an old US army duvet. Next day snow turned us back and Robin and I went down to reprovision in Cogne. A Camberwell Beauty sunned itself by the path. Renewing our attack we went up the E ridge of the Herbetet and started down the NW ridge but were soon in difficulty with wet snow on ice, complicated by Robin breaking a crampon. Eventually we traversed across the N face precariously on slabs and ice and got off the glacier with the last of the light, reaching the casolari at 10pm. We then went round to the Val Savaranche and up to the Vittorio Emanuele hut-hotel. From there we climbed the SE face of the Gran Paradiso and came down the ordinary SW face; the main obstacle was a rickety Virgin recently attached to one of the steps on the summit ridge.

Taking in a delightful lunch under a trellis of vines at the little inn at Introd, we went round to Courmayeur. Robin and Renée did the Aiguille du Géant while Basil and I loafed in the hayfields and in the evening we drove up to the Elisabeta at the head of the Val Veni, intending the Trélatête. The weather was so bad the next morning that we didn't even get up. Mont Blanc seemed to be attracting the worst of the weather so we drove away up the Val Grisanche to Fornet and walked on to the unattractive Rifugio Bezzi. Thence we had a good day climbing the Grande Sassièrè by its E ridge, having fun with the double cornices of which Yeld and the guide-book warn. Up early to a splendid breakfast in the sun at Planeval, we returned to the Elisabeta. Basil chose to spend the next day on a photographic walk



82 Val Grisanche and Grand Sassière from 9000m

but the rest of us went up to the Estellettes bivouac from which the views of Mont Blanc as the sun went down, and again as the moon came up, were as good as any I have ever seen. We climbed the Trélatête and had a farewell banquet in the surprising 17th century room at the back of the hotel at Villeneuve. We were then blocked by landslides coming down the Great St Bernard. As I had to be in London, I abandoned the others and walked down over sticky yellow mud to Martigny. This excellent holiday was well commemorated by Basil's fine photographs, of which he gave a selection to the other members of the party.

I was so pleased with the unsophistication and relative solitude of the Graians that I, with Peter Lloyd and our respective families, returned next year. Allan Pullinger flew out and I picked him up at Aosta next morning. We found the Vittorio Sella locked up; a shed at one end, described as 'winter quarters', was open but no food, wine, cooking utensils, crockery or fuel. We managed, and hurried up the Grand Sertz in the morning. Then we went to the Antoldi bivouac and traversed Punta Patri to Valnontey. After an off-day we drove down the valley to Vièyes and

walked up to the casolari on the Alpe Grand Noumenon where the guide-book falsely promised us 'pastoral hospitality'. No-one was there except two Gardes Chasses; the cheesemakers' hut was locked. The Gardes helped us make a hole in the wall under the roof; we climbed through, unlocked the door and rebuilt the wall. There was a strong smell of cheesemaker so we cooked and supped outside before retiring to straw inside.

Allan had prepared a splendid fire overnight in the ramshackle stove which he lit at 2am. It went like a bomb and we feared for the structure, but it was all out and we were off by 3. To get on to the N ridge of the Grivola you first make a diagonal traverse on rock and ice which from below looked harder than it proved to be. The ridge itself was of varying snow, Allan had a spell of step-cutting, but higher up there was a foot of soft snow lying on the ice; first Peter, then I, floundered up this, often attempting 4 or 5 steps before gaining an inch. Near the top I had to drive in the pick, pull up with both hands, straddle my knees sideways to take enough weight off my foot to give an upward step any chance of holding; in this inelegant fashion I left nothing useful in the way of a staircase for the others, which occasioned some complaint. Peter led the last rocky section to the summit at 11.0 where we enjoyed the sun for an hour and a half. The cloud sea below was pierced only by Dent Blanche, Weisshorn, Matterhorn, Monte Rosa and Roccia Viva. Two rock creepers fluttered round us. The descent to Epinel by the rubble of the SE face and the Trajo glacier was long.

Back in Val Savaranche we walked up to the little Sberna refuge in rain, thunder and fog. Next morning we went up the S ridge of the Herbetet, came down the





84 Aiguille de Trélatête

NNE ridge to the Colle Sud dell'Herbetet, then round on shocking snow through more thunder and rain to the Colle Orientale del Gran Neiron, just under which the Sberna stands.

Our next attempt, at a traverse of Piccolo and Gran Paradiso, failed. From the Laveciau glacier an ill-defined couloir of bad rock, loosely cemented by ice and concealed by snow, led us to a snow-shoulder above the Colle de Montandeyne where a bitter wind met us. With some ado we reached the N peak (Punta Vaccarone) of the Piccolo. Contemplation of the snow-and-ice-plastered gendarmes ahead, plus the discomfort of the wind, destroyed what was left of our (or at least my) morale, and we turned tail. Even the trip up and down Punta Vaccarone

took us over 12 hours, at which rate the whole traverse would have taken days.

Rebuffed, we went round to Courmayeur where it rained steadily and enterprise drained. The gloom was relieved by dining with Una Cameron at La Palud and at midnight the stars and moon were bright. So we went up the Val Ferret to the refuge bivouac de la Friboudze. We had forgotten the butane, so collected and carried much firewood, on which Peter cooked a savoury supper while we admired the fine view of the Tronchey arête. We intended to repeat the original traverse of the Aiguille de Leschaux (by T. S. Kennedy and Garth Marshall with Johann Fischer and Julien Grange). The guide-book rightly points out that the E branch of the Friboudze glacier is *fort raide et tres crevassée*. We breakfasted on a rock island past which a few stones rattled down. Allan led on through a few showers of small stones, then a bigger one hit him on the back; fortunately, in ducking, he took the direct blow on his sack. He was obviously in pain and had to go down, but in order to find a way down that avoided the stones we had first to go up some way on the ice till we could traverse to the right on the lips of crevasses, so reaching the route up which we should have come. Peter led down this at high speed and we revived ourselves with wine at Le Vachey.

There are some risks in mountaineering, just as there are in crossing the road or coming downstairs. Looking back, I can see that occasions of greatest risk have been my own fault, almost always through laziness. I put a foot clean through a cornice on a traverse of the Brunegghorn because I was too lazy to walk on the much steeper snow further from the edge; coming down the Leiterspitz I chose an obviously dangerous gully because it was much easier than the rocks beside it, we were unroped and Frank Fitzgerald chose more sensibly, and I only just managed to leap aside from a lethal shower of rocks. Even the accident to Allan was due to our choice (really my choice because I led into it) of the couloir because it looked so much quicker. But laziness won't cover all cases; the rock that broke John Watson's shoulder on the Teufelsgrat (*AJ* 57 177, *CCJ* 1949) was probably dislodged by the rope between him and me but I do not think greater care on our part would have avoided the accident; true we were all in a hurry, visibility was very bad and the rocks were under a thick plaster of new snow.

In 1960 there was a joint meet at Saas Fee of AC, SMC, and CC to which I was semi-attached. There was much too much snow and little was achieved. *AJ* 56 154 lists 9 climbs of which I did 3. I remember a large family party crossing the Alphubeljoch one cold and windy morning; as we continued on our way after a swift and uncomfortable breakfast below the joch, Rupert was heard to remark 'That's the worst breakfast I've ever had' but children and all were happy for a sunny afternoon at the Täsch hut. George Metcalfe and I did the Alphubel Rotgrat next day and that was my farewell to the Alps for I went to live in Africa. The tides have now washed me up in the Pyrenees where, stimulated by Tom Peacocke, I can potter happily. Although there are no glaciers, the flowers are marvellous and above 1500m you see nobody all day.

What was it all about? A refined hedonism, the most complete all-round aesthetic satisfaction, intellectual and physical stimulus and exercise. Many give the glory to God and fuss no further, on the other hand some of the most distinguished (eg John Tyndall, Leslie Stephens, Geoffrey Young) have been at least agnostic. Perhaps if we cautiously expand, in Louis MacNiece's phrase, 'God' to 'God or whatever means the good', that will cover it.¹

¹ I sought to elucidate how 'that will cover it' in *AJ* 78 168.