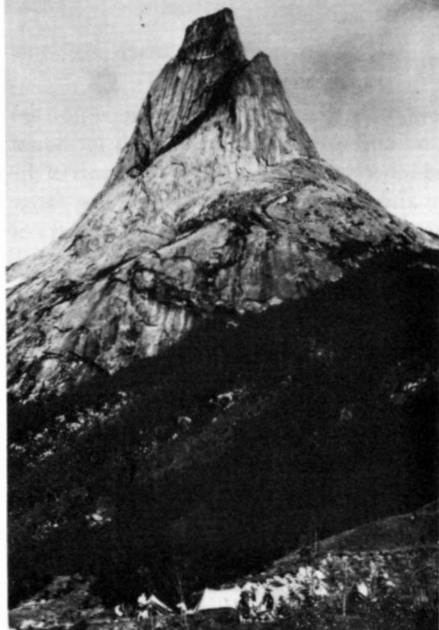




112 Stetind (Photo: B. Parker)

Regional Notes 1978

Tom Connor

THE ALPS AND EUROPE

An extended Events and Trends article by Lindsay Griffin covering the last few years of climbing in the Alps appears on p 211.

The big event in the Alps in the last winter's season (1977/78) was Ivan Ghirardini's solo conquest of the N faces of the Eiger, the Matterhorn and the Grandes Jorasses, all by their classic routes. The Schmid route on the Matterhorn took him 9 hours on 21 December, the Croz Spur (first winter solo) was climbed on 3 to 6 January and was complicated by a broken ice-axe, and the 1933 Route on the Eiger took 6 days in March 1978. Further details are given in *Mountain* 62 13 and 42.

We have previously noted how the whims of current fashion lead to a bewildering array of climbs on a particular mountain; a case in point is the Grand Pilier d'Angle for which we noted some of the considerable activity this buttress had attracted in 1975 and before (*AJ* 81 234). The situation is neatly summarized in *Mountain* 62 14 by a heading which says 'Grand Pilier d'Angle: A confusion of climbs'; this is a prefix to a letter from Mick Fowler which attempts to clarify statements about a Belgian route reported in the previous issue of *Mountain*. Fowler had written an article on a new route on the Pilier in *Mountain* 59 27.

Following our reference to the Verdon canyon last year (*AJ* 83 234) where we noted articles by John Sheard and David Belden, a further article by Pete Livesey has appeared in *Mountain* 61 22, which uses a photograph taken in the Canyon for its cover. It is excellently illustrated by photographs and maps and gives a good impression of the scope which the area provides to the rock-climber or for that matter the walker who is looking for a route through an outstandingly impressive and beautiful gorge. The preamble to the article says: 'Airy limestone climbing of 1000ft high cliffs, no crowds, no tourists; an undeveloped Yosemite on the doorstep for European climbers'. One hopes that with all the publicity the area is getting it manages to retain its present unspoiled and wild aspect. We note a French guide to the Verdon in the following pages.

The same edition of *Mountain* (61 20) contains an article by Helmut Kiene entitled 'Grade VII', in which he proposes an extension of the present 6-step system of Continental grades by an extra seventh grade and the abolition of adjectival grades. This arose from his ascent, with Reinhard Karl, of a new route of extreme difficulty on the N pillar of the Fleischbank in the Wilder Kaiser area of Austria. He believes that the development of such new climbs should not result in the down-grading of already established climbs, which will necessarily happen if

these extremely hard climbs are accommodated within an existing grading system. There is no doubt that recent developments have resulted in classification difficulties at the top end of grading scales, where, often, the top grade has been arbitrarily subdivided into a number of categories of difficulty. It perhaps seems much better to acknowledge that the scale of achievement has expanded and to create new gradings to suit.

Les Alpes (March 1978, 45) contains a breakdown of hut nights spent in Swiss huts in the season autumn 1976 to autumn 1977. The great popularity of ski-touring is indicated by the figures for huts such as the Britannia, Finsteraarhorn, Hollandia and others which have more visitors during the winter season than during the summer. In total, 241,849 hut nights were registered, which was in fact a 1.6% fall on the previous year.

La Montagne et Alpinisme (113 273) has an interesting article by Pierre Henry (the first of 2) on the origins of the names of the mountains surrounding the Chamonix valley. It is copiously illustrated with reproductions of early prints including some of William Beverley's illustrations to Albert Smith's *A Hand Book of the Ascent of Mont Blanc*, and others by Samuel Birman etc. Also included is a double page coloured spread illustrating Smith's, 'The New Game of the Ascent of Mont Blanc', which was based on Beverley's designs.

The same journal (p 253) also contains an article by Maurizio Gnudi on ski touring in the Bernina, subtitled 'Sur les traces de Marcel Kurz', who was the first to make an E to W ski traverse in this area. The article is taken from the author's recently published book, written in conjunction with Franco Malnati, entitled *Dal Sempione allo Stelvio* (Centre di Documentazione Alpina de Turin, 1977). This describes 112 ski tours in the area from the Simplon pass to the Stelvio pass, both in Italy and Switzerland.

Les Alpes (4/1977 145) contains an extremely interesting and well illustrated article by J. P. Portmann on historic and prehistoric glacier variations in the Swiss Alps. The glaciers feeding into the Val de Bagnes are given particular attention and there is an illustration which compares an 1820 watercolour by H. C. Escher with a 1974 colour photograph; the retreat of glaciation indicated in the 154-year period is remarkable. Several other 19th-century prints are reproduced showing extensive glaciation which does not exist today.

Commander M. B. Thomas RN writes that the Royal Navy and Royal Marines Mountaineering Club visited Arctic Norway in July 1978, experiencing exceptional weather with 21 days of sunshine out of 28. The expedition, which included Army and RAF representatives, climbed in 2 areas; the Tysfjord region, with Base Camps at Stefjord and Russvik on Indretysfjord, and Austvagoya (Lofoten) with Bases at Trollfjord and Leirvik on the Raftsund. Ascents included Stetind (1387m) by the normal, SE route, Store Trolltind (1045m) and Rulten (1062m). The ascents of the E ridge of Rulten happily coincided, within a month, with the 75th anniversary of the first ascent by Collie, Slingsby and others in August 1903.

The following guide-books have been received or are noted:

Walks and Climbs in the Pyrenees Kev Reynolds (Cicerone Press, Milnthorpe, 1978, pp 127, maps and diagrams, npq). A brief and excellent guide to selected climbs in this mountain range, mostly of moderate difficulty; the principal peaks are highlighted and the guide constitutes a good introduction in English to this region. How long the glued paper back would survive the rigours of use on a climbing trip is questionable.

Escalades dans les Alpes de Provence—Verdon, Cadières, Teillon and Aiglun M. Dufranc and A. Lucchesi (Editions Marrimpouey Jeune, Pau, 1975, pp 158, maps and diagrams, npq). This paperback guide largely concentrates on the climbs in the Verdon, a region whose considerable scope for extended routes on limestone up to 450m long has recently been recognized.

Escalades dans le Massif de la Saint Victoire—Les Deux Aiguilles le Signal B. Gorgeon, C. Guyomar and A. Lucchesi (Editions Marrimpouey Jeune, Pau, 1978, pp 116, many diagrams, npq). Another paperback guide to climbing on Provençal limestone, covering the central part of the massif E of Aix made famous in the paintings of Cézanne.

Le Massif des Écrins III—Ailefroide, Pelvoux, Bans and Sirac L. Devies F. Labande and M. Lalone (CAF/Arthaud, Paris, 1978, pp 311, 41 diagrams, npq). This is the 4th edition of the 3rd part of the definitive Écrins guide covering the Chaîne Ailefroide—Pelvoux, the Groupe des Bans and the Groupe Bonvoisin—Sirac.

La Chaîne de Mont Blanc I—Mont Blanc and Trélatête L. Davies and P. Henry (Arthaud, Paris, 1978, pp 492, 59 diagrams, npq). A 4th edition of the standard Guide Vallot.

Bernese Alps Central—Blumlisalp, Lauterbrunnen, Jüngfrau, Lötschental, Baltscheider—Ober/Mittelaletsch R. G. Collomb (AC Guide Books, London, 1979, pp 199, many diagrams, £7.00). A new edition of part of the 1968 guide entitled *Selected Climbs in the Bernese Alps*; a further part covering the E Bernese Alps is expected in 1980.

Excursioni in Val D'Ansiè—Le Dolomiti di Amonzo di Cadore G. P. Becher (Itinerari Alpini 30, Tamari, Bologna, 1976, pp 150, photos and maps, 5000 lira). A guide to mountain walks in the area E of Cortina d'Ampezzo.

Alta Via No 7—delle Prealpi Bellunesi e dell 'Alpago P. Fain and T. Sanmarchi (Itinerari Alpini 31, Tamari, Bologna, 1976, pp 158, maps and photos, 5000 lira). A guide to an Italian 'Grande Randonnée' in the area near Belluno.

Valmalenco N. Canetta and G. Corbellini (Guide Storiche Etnographische Naturalistiche 1, Tamari, Bologna, 1976, pp 270, maps, diagrams and photos, 6000 lira). A general guide to area of N Italy lying immediately S of the Bernina Alps.

Masino, Bregaglia, Disgrazia I A. Bonacossa and G. Rossi (Guide dei Monti d'Italia, Italian Alpine Club, Milan, 1977, pp 400, maps and photos, npq; also Vol II as above but 1975 and pp 407). Vol I covers the regions of Badile, Cengalo, Ligoncio Manduino and Sciora and Vol II Ferro, Zacca, Spartiaque Albigna-Forno, Torrone and Disgrazia. These are both 2nd editions of the original 1936 guides.

Walks and Climbs in Romsdal, Norway Tony Howard (Cicerone Press, 1970, pp 174, 10 photos and 24 diagrams, npq). A familiar Cicerone Press guide.

En Chartreuse et Vercors—Escalades et Randonnées Serge Coupé (Arthaud, Grenoble, 1978, pp 180, 48 b & w and 65 colour photos, 17 diagrams, npq).

Mont Blanc Range Vol. II. Chamonix Aiguilles—Rochefort—Jorasses—Leschaux Lindsay Griffin (Alpine Club, 1978, pp 222, route diagrams, £6.00). This second volume in the Club's 3-volume revision of the Mont Blanc guides gives approximately half as many climbs again as the original 1967 edition. This is largely accounted for by the inclusion of post-'65 climbs, but also by the addition of a sprinkling of older climbs; existing routes have been amended and re-graded where necessary. This selection of routes in English provides a most useful service in giving the majority of British climbers all they need for the area—those searching for more off-beat routes will have to struggle with Vallot French. The standard of production is good with clear diagrams.

Julian Alps Robin Collomb (West Col, 1978, pp 136, maps, route diagrams, drawings, npq). This latest volume in the series of West Col Alpine Guides is a 'Mountain Walking and Outline Climbing Guide' to a range which has received scant attention from British climbers, but which, situated half in Italy and half in Yugoslavia, is one of the finest limestone regions in the Alps. The guide concentrates on mountain walking and the 'mountaineering' type of route on the major peaks, but also contains a good sprinkling of the more important harder climbs, and is an excellent introduction to the area. It is attractively produced in flexible covers which seem to be tougher than they look. The only minor error spotted is that the Pokljuka forest area is E of Triglav, not W.

Guide des Pyrénées Basques. Promenades—Ascensions—Escalades Miguel Angulo (Marrimpouey Jeune, Pau, 1977, pp xxvi, 358, maps and drawings, npq). A detailed walking/climbing guide to the Basque Pyrenees. This little-known (to British climbers) area stretches for some 120km E from San Sebastian on the N Spanish coast and represents more than a quarter of the whole chain, extending for a considerable distance either side of the border. Whilst the mountains are not high—the adjoining peaks of Anie (2504m) and Trois Rois (2444m) are the highest—it is a fascinating rugged area, seamed with gorges. The guide, which contains many maps and is embellished by a number of the author's own drawings, details a total of 281 itineraries, of which the final 48 are in a section of 'Escalades et Voies Difficiles'.

Escalades dans le Massif des Calanques Alexis Lucchesi (Marrimpouey Jeune, Pau, npq). The following volumes of the comprehensive series of climbing guides to the Calanques by Alexis Lucchesi have been received from the author; all have maps, numerous topo- diagrams and one or two photos:

Chaîne de Marseilleveyre. I. Les Goudes, St. Michel (pp 176, 1977).

Chaîne de Marseilleveyre. III. Mounine, Callot, Plan des Cailles, Les Iles (pp 120, 1977).

Chaîne de Marseilleveyre. IV. Bougie, Melette, Walkyries (pp 128, 1978).

Sormiou (pp 104, 1977).

Devenson, Gardiole (pp 200, 1976).

AFRICA

THE ATLAS

Off Belay 39 12 contains a brief descriptive article by Kev Reynolds on the High Atlas.

EAST AFRICA

The ubiquitous Reinhold Messner, partnered by Konrad Renzler, climbed the Breach Icicle on Kilimanjaro (5895m) on 31 January 1978 for the first time. Just previously, Henry Barber and Rob Taylor had all but completed the route on 14 January when Taylor fell and broke an ankle—an epic retreat followed. Bob Barton and Dave Morris climbed a fine new direct route on the Heim Glacier. On Mount Kenya (5199m), the same pair completed a Grade VI climb on the hanging Forel Glacier, thought to be probably the most difficult ice climb undertaken in Kenya. Ian Howell and Iain Allen made a new direct route on the Diamond Buttress (VI, A3, 2 bivouacs). Several other hard routes have had further ascents; the Diamond Couloir by Australians Greg Mortimer and Vince Fayad (winter conditions; late October) and Henry Barber and Rob Taylor (summer conditions; January). It seems that this climb is better undertaken under winter conditions.

Visiting climbers to Hell's Gate Gorge, particularly Henry Barber, have been pushing the standards higher and higher. The Australian grading system is being adopted by most climbers in the Gorge and seems to work well. A fine new sustained route has emerged, *Andromeda*, on the steepest part of the main wall; its various pitches are graded 17, 20, 19, 19, 15, 21, 21. Further details may be found in *Mountain* 61 11.

SOUTH AFRICA

We are indebted to Michael Scott for the following review of the 1977/78 rock-climbing season in South Africa.

The province of Transvaal, long thought to have no mountains worth climbing, is now known for a multitude of cliffs of superb rock, seldom getting any bad weather. Blouberg is a magnificent 250m wall in the N Transvaal where every route opened was 'G' grade until the recent *Half Moon* climb put up by Paul Fatti and Art McGarr at 'E3' and one aid move. They now have a number of routes to their credit here, and the cliff seems to be becoming more and more climbable.

Meanwhile in the Loskop Dam area, near picturesque waterworn kloofs known as the Hell, the Scheepers Kloof crag has been extensively developed, particularly by Eckhard Haber. Nearby, the Magageni amphitheatre has yielded some fine lines to Greg Moseley and various partners. The most dramatic line to date is *Head Arrangement* at 'G' and aid, by Moseley with John Fantini, and this takes the steep rib on the W Wing.

Monteseel near Pietermaritzburg in Natal received 2 periods of revitalization; the first when Richard Smithers and Mike Roberts started filling in all the blank spaces and the second when John Fantini and Smithers cleaned up a few desperate eliminates.

On Table Mountain in Cape Town, various parties have applied themselves to aid eliminations on routes such as *Captain Hook*, *Myrrh*, *Africa Scandal* and *Hacksaw*. All have been climbed free, except for one rest point on *Captain Hook*. Some of the eliminations, such as *Myrrh*, have been of long, completely mechanical pitches, which is quite startling.

The era of 'G3' and 'H' grades seems to have arrived. At last bold young climbers such as Chris Lomax, Brian Gross, Greg Lacey, Mike Roberts and the exceptionally able Dave Davies admit that their climbs are harder than anything existing, and break the myth that our grading was not meant to be open ended. Apart from some 'G3' climbing on the Krakadouw Amphitheatre in the Cedarberg, all the 'G3's' are on Table Mountain, such as *Excalibur* on Lion's Head, and *Natal Fever* on Postern Buttress. The 'H1' pitch is considered to be an on-sight free lead of *Captain Hook*, which at present has only been led by practised leaders.