Spain: The Sierra de Gredos 1988

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(*Plate* 103)

Guidebooks: *Gredos mountains and Sierra Nevada* (R G Collomb), West Col 1987.

La Sierra de Gredos (Adrados), Guias de Montana 1981.

After last year's article by John Harding (*AJ*93, 141–145, 1988/89) which concentrated on the ski-mountaineering potential of the range, it is perhaps worth drawing attention to the very fine ice-climbing that is available from the conveniently situated Elola hut in the Gredos Cirque.

Jan Solov and Lindsay Griffin spent about eight days here at Easter (late March/April) in 1988. There was plenty of snow around and, without a track, the walk to the hut with heavy sacks takes five to six hours from the roadhead at La Plataforma. The hut, which holds 130, had at least this number of visitors for the national holiday, though there were apparently no other climbers. An AC card allowed half-price accommodation at £1 a night from the very friendly guardians. The weather was perfect for the first five days, with night-time temperatures of −3 to −4°C, giving ice conditions comparable with the best experienced in Scotland and crisp névé elsewhere. The rock is rough red granite. Summiteers are rewarded with beautiful panoramas across the vast expanse of the southern plains.

The normal route to the summit of Ameal de Pablo (2505m) was well plastered with a build-up of futuristically sculptured rime. It gave a short, enjoyable outing at Scottish 2, and so did the diagonal chimney line on the S face (mixed Scottish 3). Ice-falls on the direct approach to this peak from the hut gave several pitches of Scottish 2/3.

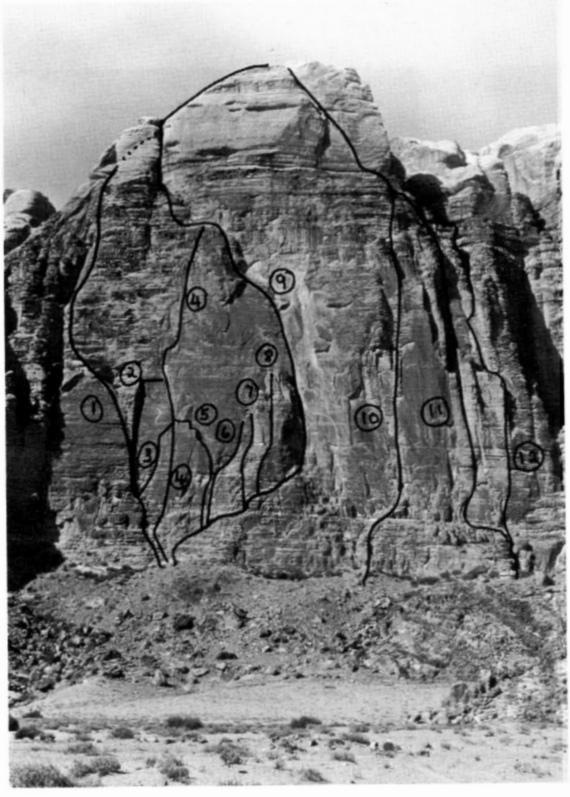
One of the most obvious lines in the area is the central gully on the NE face of Al Manzour (2592m). After a steady approach up perfect névé, the crux gave a pitch reminiscent of, though slightly easier than, the left fork of Clogwyn Du. The airy summit (and highest point) in the range was reached directly after a few more enjoyable pitches on mixed ground (Scottish 3/4).

Various parts of the main ridge were traversed and the spectacular crossing of La Galana was found to be particularly worthwhile. The complete horseshoe from Altos del Morezon to the Paso del Rey in the west would give a magnificent expedition, although it is possible to avoid many of the difficulties by descents on to the S flank. It is probably pretty good value in summer!

South of the hut the 300m face leading to the Campana crest sported an imposing free-standing icicle and several long and interesting lines leading on to the upper slopes. The N face of Cuchillar de las Navajas (2507m) lies above a snow basin that can be reached directly (Scottish 1/2) or traversed on to. Above lies a wealth of attractive gullies and ice smears. One of the more obvious lines was climbed in four pitches (Scottish 5), and there is obviously scope for some thin and sustained entertainment.



103. (Above) Sierra de Gredos: Riso Moreno and Ameal de Pablo. (p 231)



104. Jordan: Jebel Rum – East Dome – East Face. (p 250)

1 *'I.B.M.' 400m TD*
2 *'Flight of Fancy' 5c*
3 *'Mad Frogs and Englishmen' 5c*
4 *'Towering Inferno' 300m ED inf*
5 *'Walk like an Egyptian' 4c*
6 *'Troubadour' 5c*
7 *'Wall of Lace' 5a*
8 *'Goldfinger' 5a*
9 *'Inshallah Factor' 450m TD sup*
10 *'Red Sea' 450m ED*
11 *'Atalla' 450m TD sup*
12 *'Aquarius' 300m TD sup*
... *through cave 'Eye of Allah'*