



THE CRAG MAG

WOLVERHAMPTON MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

27th April, 1971

NEWS LETTER

HOT LINE NEWS!

Smiler fails H.V.S. - Hamish & Aunty dodge the avalanches - Wink gets slogged on his 21st - The Tigers hit the rock at Easter - Llanmynech guide almost ready.

DETAILS

A mere? H.V.S. stopped the Cuthbertsons on the String of Pearls traverse in Cornwall at Easter. Perfect weather did see them gain a little back on the following day. Even the Dutfields were there !

The Tigers hit the pass at Easter and did justice to the sun. Caddick in splendid form as he showed off his training.

Up in the North Country, Hilary and Dave dodged in and out of the avalanches as they shot up Raeburns on Lochnagar in 2 1/4 hours - not bad seeing as it was thawing fast! Perhaps they're another Eiger possibility?

Talking about the Eiger, don't forget the Lecture on May 19th -(that's a Wednesday night) If you haven't got tickets, I have!

Gordon tells me the guide to Llanmynech is nearly ready and looking good, although you had all better get your orders in fast because he's ordered the first 500!!

CLUB MAG.

Wink's still waiting for a couple more articles, so get your pens out.

CLIMBING MAGAZINES

We've "upped" the number of 'Mountain' mags to twenty now and if you want then you can order them - Payment in advance!! (see Hilary)
This applies to Rocksport and Mountaineering as well.

M.L.C.

Harold Drasdo has agreed to do a series of weekend courses for the Mountain Leadership Certificate - I'm interested. Anyone else?

VOLUNTARY SUBS

Members are asking 'what are we doing with the money?' Well, I've got to go to the Alps haven't I? No, seriously folks, it's the Club's prime intention to try and get another club hut. We hope this money will help.

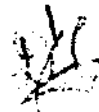
QUESTIONNAIRE

If you receive one, please try to fill it in and return it to Chris - these are for our benefit.

LAST NOTE

Wink's 21 now and boy! - did he get drunk!!??**!

P.S. Remember, it's the W.M.C's 21st next year!



D.J.C.

WOLVERHAMPTON MOUNTAINEERING CLUB

JOURNAL 1972

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EDITORIAL NOTE

Yes its here at last what you have all been waiting for the second edition of "Crag Mag"! Once again I've been lumbered with this tedious, heartbreaking, backbreaking, unrewarding, fantastic job of producing this superb magazine. And you'll be glad to hear that I'm doing the next issue as well, its your fault you voted for me.

As you have no doubt realised, this edition is about six months out of date thats why most of the articles sound as if they came out of the Ark. Well you shouldn't have written them so soon you know what a lazey --- I am. If your wondering why this edition is so thin its because we're using thinner paper, and nice things come in little packages - well I can't think of any other excuse. Oh - 'Never mind the width feel the quality'.

I would like to thank everyone who has helped in producing this magazine - Ken Wilson, Alistair McLean, Dennis Wheatly, Christian Bonnington, Spike Milligan, Me, and just about everyone in the W.M.C. Now that I've finished passing the book you might as well suffer the rest - and blame someone else if you dont like it.

Wink

CLUB NEWS

A great dinner last year at the "Royal Goat" in Beddgelart, and an even better one this year at the "Royal Oak" in Keswick.

New members have been coming thick and fast - they've obviously heard of Mick Caddick's new persuasive tactics. There are some new members that dont appear to have filled in an application form though.

Jason Caire
Emma Hibbett
Miss
Spedding

Future New Members

Doug Lovatt, Jnr
Dave Cuthbertson, Jnr
Dave Burton, Jnr
Gray Poole, Jnr Well Done Tigers

With all these new members we need a new hut, so save your pennies and Dougy will look after your pounds. We've had a fantastic response so far with gifts and loans from members, but we need more if we are to buy a suitable hut.

Outdoor meetings this year have been well attended with some good meetings at the Bowderstone hut, Borrowdale. Several classic routes were done over the weekend from Napes Needle to Praying Mantis. The Cuthbertsons did DDT on Goat Crag, and Smiler commented that it was harder and less protected than the Strand.

There was a very good unofficial meeting at Cornwall in Easter, routes were done on all the three main cliffs and everyone had a good time. So it's

hoped that we can have another gathering in the West Country this year.

Wales has taken it's usual hammering on the rock, but no good ice routes were done due to another very mild winter. However, several very hard rockclimbs were done some of which were still single figured ascents:- Tramgo, Spiders Web, Tyrannosaurus - Rex, and Jaborwocki. Dave Plant seems to be the only falling leading last year, he exploded from the top of Central Park which is getting to be an ancient event. It's rumoured that he fell off the big pitch of the Grooves on Cynr Las five times, but undeterred made it to the top. The only other rope antic was Wink's superbly executed retreat from the girdle of Dinas Cromlech.

The Alps.

A great season in the Alps, with about a dozen club members out there it was

Just like a club meeting.

CLIMBS DONE.

SWITZERLAND

Weiasmiss

Fletschorn and Lagginhorn Traverse

Stralhorn

Alalinhorn

Zuinsteinspitz (Monta Rosa), Dave Wilkinson (Mk II)
Hillary Clarke

Wellenkuppe - N.E. Face via Norman Neruda

Matterhorn - N. Face via Schmidt Route.

Wink and Smiler

FRENCH ALPS

Aig Du Midi - Frendo Spur, Smiler and Wink

Dave Wilkinson and P. Denny.

Aig Du Blaittere - Spencer Couloir, Dave Wilkinson and T. Schulty (Sweden)

Aig Du Tour - Traverse

Aig Du Chardonnet - N. Face

Aig Du Reguin - E. Face (Contamine)

Aig Du L.M. N.N.G. Ridge

Midi - Plan Traverse Aig Du

Requin, S.E. Face Aig Du

Dru - West Face

}
} Dave Wilkinson and Dave Hill

}
} Smiler, Wink and Alan Rouse

}
} Smiler and Wink

Grande Jorrasses - Walker Spur

Smiler and Wink accompanied by Satoh
Katsuhisa and Morinaga Nobuyuki (Japan)

DOLOMITES

Torre Grande - S. Face (Via Franchesch)

Cima Piccola - (Priusse Rielly)

Tofana De Roses - S. Face (Primo Spigolo)

}
} Mike Thompson

}
} Dave Plant &

}
} Mick Caddick

GUIDES ON THE GREAT CLIMBS

"That's it! No more - I've had enough!"

Wink looked on in quiet agreement as we sat in the Alpenstock. It had been a good effort from both of us and the twelve-hour descent from the top of the Dru had taken its toll. It was nearly too much to hold the glass of beer in our blistered, worn hands.

It appeared that we alone had completed our route after that terrible storm had swept the range, leaving a mangled wreck of a cable car in the Midi, and who knows how many good men dead! Minks was hurt pretty bad after a fall on the descent from the Col de la Forche, and many of the others were nursing cuts and bruises from one hell of a night out.

There was only time for a quick one that night and then to a well-earned pit.

Next morning, we lounged in perfect weather while a steady troop of friends came and left after checking that we were O.K.

"Oh yes, we're alright, but we were caught on the pegs in the ninety metre diedre, and it was pretty close".

Our thoughts now and then strayed from the present to the future. Vast amounts of brews went down a treat, Wink and I sharing the work load and sharing the sunbathing.

The next few days passed quickly and uneventfully and we both grew a little apprehensive. The Japs had since asked us to climb with them on the Walker, and after many good times with them it was a difficult decision to make. They were good blokes but a little slow - and Satoh was nearly forty. I thought about it a lot before I said anything. How would they be? What would we be like? After all, wasn't this the big one that I'd dreamed of for six years! Wink was as keen as me to go but we couldn't decide whether to go this year or next. It would be no pushover, even though we were fit, and to go with two slow climbers tagging along was to ensure at least two days - two days exposed to the mighty North Wall of the Grande Jorasses. It seemed so much against our religious attitude to speed. It was tempting to attack, but how could we ignore them? The decision had to be made.

I could read Wink's face as we chatted; it seemed to say, 'If you say 'go' then I'm keen, but if you're not keen, then I'm not either'.

We had got along really well together in the past four weeks and could talk frankly without irritating each other. This, I had felt, was our greatest success, and now it was just like the other times. We had to decide whether to go or not.

"Let's go then" I said, trying to reason what could happen. Wink packed the food; I packed the gear and our cash amounting to ten francs each.

On the Saturday afternoon, four climbers trudged slowly up the glacier to the second biggest face in the Alps. There was no talking. Each climber took his own line, and eventually, at about 6.00p.m. we reached the hut. It was packed like sardines and the disappointment showed on our faces when we discovered that all the teams were going on the Spur.

Minks arrived, recovered sufficiently to go alone for the Walker. Phillips arrived, heading for the Petite Jorasses. He was alone too. After a brief exchange of 'Phillipo's - here we come' the hut resumed to a strange silence as each climber dozed and thought of the morrow.

At 11 o'clock someone got up and went outside. Almost immediately everyone had woken and were packing gear. The chap returned and slid back into his sleeping bag. Everyone looked on and then followed suit.

Silence returned.

I found this very funny and knew that we would have to be up first and cooking before the place was like a football match crowd.

We rose at 1 o'clock and roused Minks. Breakfast was good for we were quite hungry. Our meal consisted of tea, porridge, skippers and then more tea. It was well after 2 o'clock before that lot went down.

Out on the glacier silence resumed, apart from the crunching of boots in the ice and snow. Our team seemed to be pulling away from Minks, but I knew this order would not last when we got on the rock. The Japs were going quite well but we were still well back in the queue of Continentals when the ice field was reached. Wink was going splendidly. I found it hard to keep up and on a double bergshrund he had to pull me up. With the Japs successfully hauled up we continued up the ice to the famous Rebuffat Crack. Grade six for 200 feet - we looked up at this vertical fissure in admiration of those explorers from across the Border.

It looked quite impressive at this time in the morning. Wink made short work of it, and we were soon racing across traverses and up short buttresses to where we caught the mob up. Minks was well up in the 75 metre diedre, and we could only hear his cursing and shouts of "Odin" every half-hour. Here we decided to wait for our mates. It was only 9.00a.m. and although the rest of the climbers would soon lose us, we felt we were going quite well.

It was a long time before we started to wonder where the Japs were. Had they fallen, or were they caught up amongst another bunch of climbers lower down? As we waited we brewed tea and soup and nearly finished off our rations of cigars and cigarettes. I started to feel as if we were making a mistake waiting. Perhaps the weather changed? Wink grew as restless as me. No more were there voices drifting down from the towers above. All was quiet.

Top Left

The Tour Grise in
the late evening.

Below Left

Late afternoon on
2nd Day - Dave Wilkinson,
Dave Cuthbertson &
Satoh Katsu-Hisa on the
summit of the Grande
Jorrasse.

Below

A triumphant Morinaga.
breaks through the snow
crest to the summit.

Pictures By Dave Wilkinson.



Then we could see them. No.... they were French, followed by Italians, and eventually two and a half hours from the time we reached the diedre, Satoh and Morinaga struggled onto our ledge. I was furious and no amount of apologies could make me change my mind. Wink would take Morinaga and I would climb with Satoh. We had promised to stay with them and although it now meant a bivoac not so high on the face, at least we could climb as fast as possible and then give them assistance from above.

So we climbed upwards into the mists. Many pitches stick out - the snowfield, the pendulum, the icy overhang - and at six o'clock, hard on the heels of the Italians, we reached the foot of the Tour Grise, a superb rock tower of immense size. Our guidebook said three or four pitches of five superior at the most, and above was the guidebook bivoac ledge.

I was quite happy about the situation now. Both Wink and I were enjoying the leading on this tremendous face and with at least three hours of daylight left we were sure of getting to the good bivy ledges.

Out of sight round the buttress, trouble loomed as the wind picked up and gradually a mass of black cloud blotted out the valley and neighbouring mountains. The Japs were very slow on the pitches and there seemed no incentive for them to hurry. That's all right for climbers who practice standing on six-inch ledges all night, but not for Wink and me!

Eight o'clock came and with it, rain and hail. There was a little lightning but not too serious. Our position was very serious though. If we couldn't get on to easier ground we would be in trouble in a storm. Those three or four pitches turned into five, then six, and at last a final pitch on to easy ground. I was climbing with Wink's head torch for the last hour, and at 10.20p.m. arrived on the ledge. It was shattering work and the Japs were really tired; not saying that we weren't mind you!

The bivy tent was pegged up and we all piled in. It had been a hard day but at least we had cracked the most difficult climbing. Tomorrow we would be up. I was very excited by this prospect and, apart from falling asleep from time to time, Wink and I managed to cook a meal and enjoy it.

The storm broke at 11.00p.m. and the Midi looked as if it was catching the worst. Hail built up behind us and we kept on having to clear it away. Luckily, the main brunt passed over the Dru, and at about one o'clock all was well again. We slept soundly from then on.

Rising after a bivy is never easy, and this was no exception. Our hands were sore after the day's climbing and with a five superior pitch to start it was no joke.

Soon we were in sun on the crest of the spur. This place was the real Walker! Everywhere there was more ice and the pace slowed a little. A cheery shout told us that Minks was watching. Where had be bivied we wondered?

The crest led up for several long pitches to a snow field and followed back into a fearsome-looking couloir. It was well past midday and I tried to hurry, but the couloir was very steep and loose.

Soon the Red Tower was above us. The route led round to the right and we followed an easy traverse to what we thought was the summit ridge. It was, but so far away. My companion was beginning to weigh very heavy, needing a pull or tight rope on every pitch. On the steep but easy ground the idea of continuous moving together did not appeal to him, so we pitched every rope length.

Wink's partner was the best of the Japs and soon they overtook us. Inch by inch we moved up the ridge until, at 5.30p.m. on the 2nd August the summit of the Grande Jorasses was beneath my feet! I tried to conjure up some excitement but there was no spare energy, so with a quick handshake with Wink, Satoh and Morinaga, we set off in thick mist for the hut.

The scenes on that descent were incredible! Satoh and I tumbled our way down snow-slope after snow-slope!

Wink was having the same trouble, only Morinaga was falling and Wink was being pulled through the air. The Jap had fallen over 200ft. and had landed awkwardly. The situation was now again quite bad. It was after seven, and still a long way to go. Although the ground was easy, snow slopes, and in an out of crevasses, the Japs moved now even slower and we began to realise that another bivoac was highly likely.

A halt was called for discussion.

"Satoh, I don't want to bivoac again"

"Oh yes, thank you" was the reply - as usual.

After much effort, we made them understand that they would not reach the hut that night. There were rock ridges littered around so there was no problem as regards a bivoac ledge, but Wink's gear was soaked and I just didn't want to bivy again. Satoh and Morinaga understood the situation and suggested that we should carry on as they were slow but would be quite all right. (I though you'd never ask!!)

Wink had no crampons, whereas I had mine on, so Wink led down. At breakneck pace we soon caught up with four Chamonix guides who had passed us earlier.

It was here, after thirty-four hours from the Lescaux hut that we made our first mistake. From this point the French had traversed across a very steep ice serac on to relatively safe but slow ground, over on the right of the valley. Below was the Valley of Death, so called because of its crevassed state which, in the early morning, is quite safe, but a different story from 12 noon onwards.

We chose to follow the French and with an axe belay safeguarding him, Wink climbed across. About halfway he turned and said, "The steps are huge here. It's very easy - you might as well start".

"O.K. then" I said, and inched out across the traverse. Suddenly I froze in horror! As I watched, Wink seemed to explode in a cloud of snow.

"He's off" I thought, and struggled to bang my axe into the ice. With bewilderment and helplessness, I watched Wink slide down the ice. The jerk gave me no chance and down I went, rolling and falling like a rag doll. It seemed endless until the slope eased, and senses recovered slightly enough for me to realise there was now a chance of braking. Wink must have had the same idea, because we were now sliding down side by side in an ice runnel. By wedging ourselves together we slid to a stop.

Slowly we rose to examine the situation. We had gone down about 300ft. Although there were no ice cliffs around, it could have been very serious, but apart from a wet guidebook, we were untouched.

We knew now that our exit lay down the Valley of Death. It would have taken too long to reach our original traverse. We had no choice, so off again we went, only we made sure of the rope-work after our little brush off.

Although very crevassed, the descent gave us no problem and in the darkness of 9.00p.m. we reached the hut.

A good brew followed, and the guides came in at 11.00p.m. After that, we turned in.

Next morning we waited until 11.30 before Satoh and Morinaga arrived. They were fit and well after quite a comfortable night's bivoac. Their first order was for eight beers.

We left the hut in the early afternoon and sat eating ice-cream on the side of the road at five o'clock. A taxi arrived and we piled in. Down to Phillip's Restaurant for a seven course meal, and then back in the taxi - wait for it - right through the Mont Blanc tunnel to Chamonix.

Wink and I spent our ten francs on cigars and fags that night at the biggest booze-up you ever saw.

"What about next year?" they ask.

Well, there's only one left, isn't there ?

Summary; Walker Spur E.D. 4,000ft.
1st/2nd August, 1971.

D.Wilkinson
M.Habujhi D.Cuthbertson
S.Katsuhisa

29 hours climbing time.

LLANYMYNECH

Shortly after having put up some routes at Bridgnorth I received a letter from a person who was collecting information regarding sandstone outcrops. In this letter he mentioned various local quarries, including Llanymynech which was described as over half a mile long and 200ft., vertical to overhanging of compact rock, giving a very high standard of climbing - only two easy lines had been done to his knowledge.

The immediate thoughts that entered my head were that a quarry to meet the requirements of local climbers was unheard of situated on a major road! It can't be worthwhile or else it would have been discovered years ago! Two years later, after a night on the ale, I dug this letter out and decided to go take a look.

Driving along the road near the quarry we were amazed by the sight. Climbers on the Rock!

We found out that they were members of the CEUNANT club and had started climbing there a few months previous, and had bagged nearly all the obvious lines. An interim guide was published about a month later.

At the beginning of the Summer 1970 very little activity was forthcoming from members of the CEUNANT. So it was up to us members of W.M.C. to begin the second phase of development of the crag.

After feeling our feet on existing routes, we started by doing a short route called "KAKE". H.S. on the main cliff. This led us to other various parts of the cliff putting up fairly easy new routes and repeating existing hard routes.

Then after doing CONSTRUCTOR a new route overlooking the Northern quarry (previously gardened by CEUNANT) and various bits of tentative exploration, the scene was set for Whit 1970.

We camped in the main area and after a couple of days getting Smiler used to the rock we jumped in at the deep end.

On "Blind Faith Buttress" we put up 'CREAM' about 270ft. a V.S. of considerable character. The following day, probably the biggest obvious problem to date the steep arete right of Black Wall, "ZEPPLIN" H.V.S. Various parties had tried this and reckoned it to be impossible without a bott. We disproved this belief.

After the ascent of the latter route, and being much inspired, other short crisp routes followed, like 'CARRAMBA' and 'QUAKER'. Both, as names imply. Then followed a spell of repeating existing routes, asked for by Roger Bennett of CEUNANT club as he wanted our opinion of routes some of which needed the grades rectifying. This bought about the desire for a much more up-to-date guide book.

An expedition into the dense vegetation of tunnel buttress produced 'THE GROOVIEST' H.V.S., a fine route.

The main cliff seemed to have a very shallow line just left of the 'NIBBLER' which covered some steep unclimbed rock. This fell with suprisingly little trouble, and provides a good fairly vertical route of Just Extreme named 'THE POWER GAME'.

In the old guide Black Slab was unchecked at A.1. (ARTIFICIAL) because of numerous peg marks up it. Roger Bennett mentioned that he had heard a rumour that it had been climbed free. This was enough to start me wondering so after a quick inspection we nipped up this, just to dispel any rumours. The result 'BLACK WALL' H.V.S. FREE.

Due to mention in Rock Sport and Mountain, Llanymynech is at last getting a few other climbers to visit the place, the odd new route gets done and so adds to the list of existing routes. This cannot be bad for a crag the size of Llanymynech, and so in years to come, this could well become a local Mecca for hard lads of the future.

ZEPPLIN graded at H.V.S. (1pt) *now gets E2 5b*

BLACK WALL graded H.V.S. FREE *now gets E1 5b ** - Ed 2007*

DAUPHINE '70

The words on the picture postcard read "Dauphine fitness is great." As I sat in the office at work, I tried to picture what it would have been like if I could have had another couple of weeks off, if I could be there now, or even if I could go back to that dark, wet night of the 25th July when we arrived in Dover ready to start my fourth Alpine Season. Now, as I remember it

It was 1.30a.m. when we arrived at the car ferry booking office that Saturday morning in my Volkswagen. We had driven from 6.30p.m. on the Friday night to try and get a boat across during what we thought was one of the slack periods in booking.

"Sorry, no boats till Sunday night"

He's got to be joking, I thought, and after twenty minutes chatting we reduced our waiting time to 7.00p.m. on that same day. It had all been due to the dock strike and all the freighters were using the car ferries.

Despondent, we drove a couple of miles out of Dover and pitched the tent.

"At least we'll get some sleep" said Chris, as we hammered the pegs halfway into the concrete-type grass.

Saturday was spent looking for a paper and supping three halves of shandy in the pub, and after a kip on the shingle of Dover's best beach it was time to start queueing for the boat.

The loading of the car ferry took some time and we finally arrived in Calais at half-past nine.

I drove all night and, apart from losing the way, had no trouble at all. We reached Grenoble and got stopped by police for jumping an island. It was during the early morning rush hour and after a caution were allowed to continue on our way.

We reached Le Berarde on Sunday at dinner time and after having a look round the place, we set up the tents and emptied the two or so tons of food and equipment from the car. We then packed the rucksacks for our first training route.

This was to be the south face direct of the Aiguille Dibona, a seemingly short six hundred foot TD with pitches of IV, V and one of VI.

The next morning we set off at 5.45a.m. and drove down the narrow winding mountain road for about 2 miles to a place called Les Etages.

Off up the track we went and reached the hut at the foot of the face at 8.15a.m. A quarter of an hour later we were off, doing alternate pitches of 4 sup and V which neither of us found difficult. At about dinner time we arrived on a large terrace and could have avoided the final steep section which contained the grade VI pitch, but that would have been cheating, so we continued up cracks until all of a sudden the walls reared up at an ugly angle for about 100ft.

"Your lead, Chris"

"Sorry mate - I led the last one"

"Crikey, my arm's hurting"

"My knee is too - off you go!"

Ten minutes later, the so called VI pitch was below us and had gone very easily..

This was where the trouble started. We now had easier climbing all the way to the top, and yet every time we thought it was the summit there was another pinnacle in front of us and a little bit higher. It seemed like hours before we sat on the narrow, rather pretty, summit at 3.30p.m.

The decent was the type that most Alpinists dream of. Three rope lengths down slaes, a traverse across a terrace on to the snow and fifteen minutes down the snow to the hut.

We both needed a drink so we bought one glass filled a quarter full of concentrated pop and a jug of water. Being true British, we tipped the pop into the jug and topped it up with the tap outside, making a pint and a half of pop each - all for 1 franc.

We reached the road at half past six and chatted to Robin Thorndyke and his brother for about thirty minutes. We then got in the car and proceeded to run into the first French car to come along - a fine first day's holiday.

There were many good routes in the Dauphine which still had not had British ascents. One of these was the Pic Gaspard S-Ridge. Only a TD but nearly four thousand feet of climbing. With the south face direct of the Meige it would make a fabulous outing, but we needed one more short route to see if we were fit enough We chose Le Pave, a west face route of 4 to 6 hours at TD standard.

The plan was to walk up Le Berarde over the col du clot de cavattes and across to the foot of Le Pave by dinner time, then climb that route and traverse across to the Pic Gaspard ridge in the evening and bivouac there. It was then hoped to do the ridge that day, descent and bivy; we would then next morning go round the bottom of the ridge to where the gear would be stowed. We would pick up the gear and go over the col due pave to the Promontoire hut for the south face of the Meige.

Well, as you can imagine, the gear needed for a four or five day outing was far greater than what we could get in Whillans sacks, so we decided to use our totem packs. By the time we had got the gear in they were full up and way off the thirty pound scales that Chris had got.

We set off at 5.45 a.m. and it took us nine hours to reach the foot of the Pave face so we had to amend our plans straight away. The time was 4.30p.m. and we set up a bivy on a rognon about six rope lengths away from the face. Just as our meal was finished, it started to hail then thunder and lightening arrived and all hell let loose. The storm was right over the top of the Pic Gaspard, the foot of the south ridge of which was a quarter of a mile from us. Intense and vivid lightening was followed almost instantaneously by frightening thunder, and the lightening was running all the way down the ridge. It was very unnerving and lasted for nearly three hours, the hail piling up all around us. One photograph I took showed Chris almost completely buried in snow and hail.

Next morning we could do nothing till the sun came round the ridge. Our clothes, everything, were soaked and so we dried it all on the rocks and at 9.00a.m. we got kitted up and set off for the face. The weather got worse as we approached a huge buttress which marked the start of the route. The route followed a spiral ramp up the buttress and so off we set. We soon realised that the big walk with heavy sacks had taken more out of us than we had thought and we would not be able to maintain anything faster than guidebook time. This meant that we would be on the summit at about three in the afternoon. With the weather as it looked, it would have been foolish to go on just to get caught on the top in a storm. So we retreated to the rognon.

The big difference with the Dauphine to Chamonix is that if you go over one way, it's the only way back. There are no telepheriques or valleys you can use as bypasses. If you go down to a different valley it might take thirty miles to get back to Le Berarde. This meant that we had to return over the now renamed "CLOTS COL" so we sat down and ate four days food before starting off.

Actually, it did not turn out so bad because it was all downhill from the Col and the whole journey took us a mere five and a half hours.



TOP Pete Boardman and Dave Wilkinson on the Worth Wall of the Matterhorn.

BOTTOM Matterhorn Summit after 17 hours, 3uly, 1971.

Pictures by Dave Cuthbertson.



Chris had been to the Dauphine the previous year and had done a route called the South Pillar of the Ecrins. On the descent they had passed under the west face of the Ecrins, a massive stretch of rocks similar to the Cwetta, with many huge pillars and towers, all having their own routes. One of these pillars had been chosen in the English guides as being the most elegant, a 2,000ft. TD called the 'BONNE PIERRE' pillar.

Our attentions were now fully attracted to this route and one afternoon we walked up to it's foot and bivied, once again, in a storm. This time however, we had proper shelter in the form of a cave and kept reasonably dry. Next morning we were both very enthusiastic and so off up the first easy section, climbing together and only stopping for a breather every so often. It soon got steeper and pitches of IV, V and Vs up became regular. Still we kept up good time and the hardest pitch was the very last one. This VI pitch led into an easy couloir with loose rocks, and we emerged on the top after seven and a half hours from the foot of the face, well under guidebook time for the route. We were very pleased because it was our first really long route of the season. The scene looked all set for the big one, the south face direct of the Meige, a 2,500 TD of reputable standard and quality. But the weather clamped in even before we got off the BONNE PIERRE.

In order to reach the descent we had to traverse some very crevassed snow slopes leading to the north face of Les Ecrins, which is the normal and easiest way to the summit. This is where the trouble started. The mist came down thick and fast while we were traversing along the ridge to the snow. Right now we needed as much visibility as we could get, as it was getting on for 5 o'clock by this time. Chris had crampons and we both had axes, but it did not stop me sliding down the first ice field we came across. After brushing the snow off me we were off, traversing through a maze of crevasses and visibility gradually decreasing. Soon it was too difficult to see anything and we stood helpless in the snow, yawning chasms all around us and our intricate escape route blocked.

We waited a whole hour, not moving (I had a smoke of my pipe to pass the time away) because we knew that, given five minutes of view, we could reach the well-worn track of Les Ecrins.

The long-awaited five minutes came and we shot off across the snow to the track and down to the foot of the north face. Another quarter of an hour saw us on the Col du Les Ecrins and shortly after eight o'clock we reached the bivouac spot on the Bonne Pierre glacier.

Le Berarde was now only a couple of hours away but light was failing fast and we hurried our quick brew down, shoved the gear in the sacks and ran all the way along the slender, crumbling scree ridge across the moraine.

We didn't quite make it without torches but were quite happy to have a couple of beers before the pub shut.

After a day's rest we were now thinking of our next route. The weather was now not so settled as before and the storms came round every afternoon regularly at about three o'clock. This meant that we could not go on Le Miego, so we thought a good fill-in would be Le Bans. This mountain has two fine routes and they are not too long or difficult. One was an ice climb of D standard (which was unfortunately bare ice and very much out of condition), whilst the other was the north east pillar, AD standard, 1,300 long and a guidebook time of 4 to 6 hours. Well, we thought, if we can't do that in guidebook time we should pack up and go home (if we escaped from the storm), so we went up to the Pilatte hut the next afternoon.

"Oh!NO,'NO!" said the Gaurdienne, when we told her of our plan to do the north east pillar.

"It hasn't been climbed for weeks and with this Weather, the mountain is very dangerous, although you would be alright on the 'Via Normal'".

Chris and I looked at each other and he told her we would see what it was like in the morning. "After all, we could always do the 'Via Normal' couldn't we?".

It was an uncomfortable night with nine persons sleeping where six should be. Apparently there was a course going on that week.

Next morning at 4.30a.m. we set off to Les Bans, walking behind the forty or so troggs on their way to do the 'Via Normal'.

Pretty soon we got fed up, and shot past them, upsetting the guides a little I think, judging from the looks we got. Anyway, after almost two hours we reached the foot of the Pillar and the time was 6.30a.m. when I set off up the first attractive-looking pitch

Halfway up the first pitch a guide and his client arrived and Chris found out that they would be trying the route. Knowing how fast guides climb, we hurried on and soon it became apparent that we could climb together, so we went flat out, up buttresses and chimneys and finally up a broad arete to the summit. We were really surprised. It had taken us just 1 hour 40 minutes to do the route. It had been a magnificent climb and all that remained was a quick sprint across the ridge and down the 'Via Normal' route, overtaking on the way all the climbers on that route. We were at full speed now, down the ridge and onto the snow. By this time we had left the other climbers well behind and twenty minutes later were approaching the hut when, to our surprise, we overtook the guide and his client who had decided the weather hadn't looked good so they had retreated after a couple of pitches. They were most surprised at our speed and they couldn't even keep up with us up to the hut.'

We arrived there at 10.30a.m. with not a soul about. The Gaurdienne came into the cooking room. She was also surprised to see us.

"Les Bans?"

"Oui!"

"Via Normal?"

"Non. Pilier Nord-est!"

"MON DIEU!!"

As we knew the north east couloir was out for us, we went down to the valley that same afternoon and had a day's festering in the much improving weather. We were now fully switched on to the south face direct on Le Miege. We were now fit enough; all we needed was one good day's weather and the time seemed to be right.

Two days later, after a night in the Promontoire hut, we slid down the abseil rope on to the snow and slogged up to the foot of the face. It was 5.00a.m. The climb was in three stages. The first section was easy climbing up to a large terrace. From the right-hand end of the terrace, the difficult climbing started and took us up to another large terrace, some 2,000 ft. up the face. The normal south face route traversed

this terrace and escaped up a steep snowfield called the Glacier Carre. Our direct route continued up steep walls with very fine pitches to a couloir coming from the right hand side of the face. After a short halt for something to eat and drink we carried on up the face and arrived at the junction of the descent route.

Neither of us wanted to scramble up a few hundred feet of choss so we turned down for home, and after overtaking a couple of blokes, arrived at the hut at half-past five. The route had taken us 9 1/2 hours and the descent, 3 hours. About an hour later, the two climbers we had overtaken arrived in the hut; one of them had been hit by a stone and his face was covered in blood. A nice sight when you're noshing beef stew!

We were off again at half past six and with the weather deteriorating very fast we ran down the snow from the hut on to the moraine and off down the valley. About an hour from Le Berarde there was a fantastic storm. The rain was puring down (not that it bothered us by this time) and the lightening was so great that you could have read a page out of the guidebook while it lasted. Needless to say, the thunder was deafening.

Next morning the whole scene was white over and we reflected on our lucky escape. The very same night, 14 climbers were killed in the Mont Blanc range. It had been just as well that we had climbed fairly fast or we could have been still up there like fried toast.

The storm now left us in a bit of a quandry. I had only seven days left now and still wanted to do a route in Chamonix. The two routes we wanted to do in the Dauphine were now completely out of condition. The Pic D'Olan north west face would have had to have had at least three days to clear of snow, and the Pic Gaspard at least a day and a half of sun. Both routes meant leaving Le Berarde. The Olan was in the apposite direction from Chamonix and if we had gone there to wait, I would have forgotten Chamonix so we chose the Pic Gaspard ridge.

Packing the car was quite a laugh in the hot sun, and we didn't get away till dinner time. A quick nip round the mountains and we found ourselves in Le Grave, at the back of Le Alfereoid, in thick mist. It was very cold and we nipped into the souvenir shop to have a look around. The Pic Gaspard was under a blanket of snow and mist, and snow had fallen to a very low level. Even if the sun had been shining at that moment, it would have been a day at least before we could think about going up; so with a bit of persuasion we were back in the car and heading for the 'Nash'.

"And it's home, boys, home"

OUT OF THE SHADOW - INTO THE SUN!

Winter ice climbing in Scotland! Words enough to chill the souls of many a hardy climber. Short, cold days, and long dark nights combine to give Scotland an aura of silent cold majesty!

But how about ice climbing one weekend and then sun-bathing on scorched rock the next? Sounds tempting doesn't it? Well, this was the scene for the end of March and early April, when, with a few mates we trod the weary steps to Glencoe followed by a dreamy weekend on the Cornish Cliffs. But for the shadow....

We headed for Stob Corrie Nan lochan - but missed it! So we camped up underneath Bidean. This was 11 o'clock on the Saturday morning when the snow was falling fast. Of course, it didn't stop - just turned to rain, and wind popped up to make matters just that little bit more exiting. Oh no! It didn't stop like in the books, but poured and poured and poured, and misery was complete when two hardy climbers descended the vertical ice chute we had eyed up for a possible 8 hour ascent! Still, the beer on Sunday dinner went down a treat!! What about some sun?

After about 2½ hours of waiting, we decided to abandon our attempt, so a couple of good V.S's led us back to the sun-drenched beach. The String of Pearls could wait till tomorrow.

Imagine! Twenty three climbers on two hundred square feet of rock at the same time!!

Next morning saw us back at the start and more waiting. The problem was a hundred foot long stretch which contained all the hard routes. Climbers littered the wall and with thoughts of "what would T.C. have done here?" we inched our way along the traverse, and so to freedom. We never finished it though after all that - I failed and Bill fell off! Still, the beer on Monday night went down a treat!

"T.C. says it's only V.S".

When I finally decided to abandon my attempt at getting the Missus down to the rocks, I found them all sitting at the bottom. "But it's wet!"

Dinosaurs to the fore, we inched our way up the terrible precipice to find that once more, sun-drenched beach.

"When will the sun go in?!!!"

GOGARTH SUMMER

I had never seen the big white cliffs of Gogarth until the B.B.C. broadcasted three big climbs at Anglesey. Climbers cheered in the Vaynol as the heroes inched their way up the crumbling cliffs. I wondered, could that be me?

Next morning in Wendy's, Captain Marvel (alias Tiger Mick) said, "Wen Slab! It looked a piece of cake - still, we've no guidebook". A green back is slapped on the table and one guidebook appears - EEK!

Four of us storm up Wen Slab behind Smiler, but find that it's a wall, not a slab. After climbing in the Pass all year this was just the thing to stimulate new interest. Good old B.B.C.

Smiler and myself returned to Gogarth's Main Cliff to do "Scavenger" one of Boysen's very severes. We were duly impressed, and if this was the general standard on Gogarth, it was back to the pass!

After this came "Times Square" a grade harder but about the same standard of difficulty, except for the sensational finish. Looking through the guidebook we realised that Gogarth was the place to be, with a hundred and fifty routes waiting to be done. From then on the routes fell fast - Ramp; Gauntlet; Diogenes; and Mousetrap.

We had been very impressed with the rock in Wen Zawn, so we returned to do Ed Drummond's route, "A Dream of White Horses" - a superb route that girdled the Zawn from the bottom right to the top left. Elegant climbing across the big slab to Wen, then up a diagonal crack with increasing difficulty. From here, a horizontal traverse above the great overhangs of the Zawn - sensational climbing on huge jugs.

Before the televised Anglesey climbs we had heard of a route called 'Spider's Web' a brown extreme that hadn't had a second ascent after two years of its making. Seeing Brown repeat his route on B.B.C. we were keen to have a crack. Asking around, we heard that the Web had repulsed several strong parties. Smiler was spurred on.

A Saturday morning saw us back at Wen Zawn. We climbed down to Genflux and peeped round the corner EEEK.' I'd seen enough. The waves were crashing all around us! It took twenty minutes for Smiler to persuade me that the waves wouldn't engulf me and carry me off to Ireland. A peg went in, and Smiler was off round the corner. The next pitch was to be our biggest surprise - a very steep wall with no jugs.

We were in the cave, Smiler 'back and footed' up the flu of the chimney, screamed, and slid down the rope. Half way down a peg goes in for the descent rope to bring you nearer the lip of the overhang. Smiler swings like a spider on the end of the rope. I feel like Robert the Bruce and frantically click the shutter of my camera.

After half an hour of swinging on the rope, Smiler reluctantly came back. We slid down the rope, forgetting there was only sea underneath » we nearly got our feet wet.

Back in the pub we discussed our failure; a shorter sling on the descent peg would do the trick. The following Saturday we were back on the Web and round the overhang, dismissing one of the pegs for aid. The last pitch gave fantastic moves in a sensational position - the best route in Wales. The last route of the Summer was my namesake, Winking Crack. Shattered arms and bloody hands saw us to the top of the route to be met by Simon - who insisted on a group photo.

"THE ASCENT OF BIG B"

This two-man team bound together through a common goal (they called them 'The Myth Exploders') like so many before were about to do battle with this formidable opponent. This truly was 'The Flying Buttress', that 300ft. bastion of the Cromlech - that writhing curvetting structure soaring into space. This was no place for boys!

After the gruelling trek to the base of the buttress, we set the gear down and Ken checked over the equipment while I paid off the Sherpa's. They had done all they could; we couldn't expect them to follow any further. One of the reasons was that they believed the Rain God would become angry if we set foot on the rock. I laughed and paid off the head porter, Emlyn Williams. He said goodbye and handed me a leak for posterity.

After Ken had sorted the equipment out and we sat down, lit up our cigarettes and decided on our plan of action. Should it be a brave dash to the top, or should we take bivy gear? I was in a quandry, having never experienced such bold things as climbing in Wales. I left the decision to Ken - he was not a man to mince his words. He said we would make a dash. This set the mood.

We roped up and he gave me a letter saying, "If I should fail in my duty, give this to my mum". I was moved. With two slings round his neck he waved goodbye. After 70ft. he shouted, "Taking in" and then, "Climb when ready". This was my cue. Having never climbed before, the orders of the day were to get up any way possible. After a while I joined Ken at the first belay, not too perturbed by the first pitch, and commented "Is this what climbing's all about?" There was no reply - Ken was seriously fiddling with rope in some sort of belay procedure; he left the belay to bravely lead the second pitch.

As with the first, there was nothing much to worry about and I was by this time feeling quite confident that the expedition would be a success.

After I was secured to the rock Ken went off again. This time it was a traverse, but again he did it easily. I started off, only to get straight into trouble - both feet slipped off as I was climbing to the traverse. After a furious section of kicking and shouting I regained a foothold. My body was by this time completely out of control - my legs were doing an Irish Dig, while my head was behaving like a woodpecker's beak at lunch break. Ken shouted, "What the hell's going on?" I was unable to reply, my heart in my mouth. After about five minutes I regained my composure and carried on in good British stiff-upper-lip style, f...ing and blinding all the way to the belay. Ken was there, like all great leaders are, controlling the situation when the seconds gripped to sh..!

Perched precariously to the huge belay flakes, I knew that this was climbing. Ken moved off into the unknown. It was my turn. I groped upwards and soon found that the moves became thin. Then suddenly, in a state of panic I shouted, "Ken! - watch the rope!" With a mighty leap - a big jug, thank God, I arrived at the top of the pitch, quivering in a state of shock. Ken marvelled at my Batman exploits and headed for the summit, After some tch-ing and grunting, I joined him on the summit of "Big B" - but we forgot the flag.

(Ed: This truly must be S.M.Orton's only feat in British Mountaineering)