

THE CIOCH,  
ISLE OF SKYE.

photo : Bill

Also, great interest was expressed in the idea of borrowing another Clubs hut away from Wales somewhere so we could have an X-ABA weekend away. Well good old Mr. Owen has, on our behalf, been in contact with the Cave and Crag Club who have a modest hut at Alstonefield in the Peak District. The arrangement will be on a hut exchange basis and if you want to go you had better let Stumpy know as there will be a limit to the number of places... the Alstonefield hut is about the same sort of thing as the X-ABA Hut. This would be for early September this year.

As most of you will know we are approaching our 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary and also our 21<sup>st</sup> dinner in November 1990. Therefore we are trying to arrange a few events in order to celebrate this fact. Stumpy (bless him!) is trying to organise a "Big Trip", destination as yet undecided. Any ideas on other activities, preferably alcoholic or riotous, can be circulated in the next 'letter' if you let me know.

Anyone using the Hut of late will have seen that thanks to Stumpy we have a new door. This coming WORK WEEKEND (MAY 27/29) we could perhaps also pay some attention to the shutters.

Duffy has provided some new gas lights which have already



been fixed into place but all the piping is a bit on the old side and he feels it might be worth replacing it. Several people have commented on being able to smell a gas leak in both the kitchen and sitting areas. (Incidentally, if the gas has run out you can refill the cylinders at the petrol station by the bridge in Betws. The absence of electricity from the Hut is due to the renovative work taking place up at the house and it seems unlikely that we will retrieve our supply in the foreseeable future, even if we could afford to replace the cable. Other jobs suggested include possibly re-vamping the lining to the roof. This would involve removing the slates from a whole section of the roof (preferably a whole side - the track side is in the most need), replacing the batons and fixing new felt followed by the replacement of the slates. It is not a small job to be under taken lightly and we would need to be quite organised. So, if you think we should then let Bill know you are willing and then if there are enough people we can go ahead and get all the materials we need. I can personally vouch for the fact that sleeping upstairs is definitely getting draughtier!

#### FAMILY WEEKEND

This will be on the weekend of 9/11 July and as usual is aimed at the kiddies so if you don't like them don't go to the Hut that weekend.



PHIL IN ACTION AT COURCHEVALL.

photo : Bill Dean.

## PEOPLE

Once again we begin with reports of Club members hanging up their boots and splicing the knot. First there is Ned Botting who got married on the 25 March....rumours that he is giving up climbing have not been confirmed. Congratulations are also in order for Janet McKelvey who, incidentally, has also just moved house. This popular past-time (moving house that is) has also been taken up by Helen and Geoff who moved into their new mansion house in January. Geoff is still going strong in his instructing business and they are both hoping to go to the Romsdal at the end of the year to climb the Troll Wall by the English (Rimmon) route.

Mark Thorley is still hard at work for Glaxo but has found the time for the odd bit of peak bashing (see later). He is currently organising some mountaineering tuition under Geoff's watchful eye for his work mates in the Glaxo Climbing Club. One of our newest members Jenny Wilson also brings groups to the Hut from time to time and according to the log book the place is well thought of. Yet another outdoor instructor Phil England is going on a three week trekking trip to Everest Base Camp in March along with Tim Sparrow who is organising the trip.

Suzy Adams (who wishes to report that she has almost recovered from her Dinner Meet drinking session) announces her intention to go trekking "somewhere exotic" later this year so we can expect to see her up at the Hut a great deal this summer getting fit for it! Ding (who has never trekked further than from Tremadoc Cafe to the Ochre Slab) has finally been obliged to admit his old MG is stuffed. Now the proud owner of an Escort he is trying to re-assemble his Migets engine into a recognisable form so that he can sell it. Good luck.. he'll need it! The Clubs other car maniac Al Boyd has taken up a hobby acting in pantomimes. His director says he is a born natural surprise, surprise. Apart from this he enjoys skiing more than rock at the moment, but still makes himself available for the Hope Valley Rescue team. The Clubs most fanatical skier Bill Dean has been on the Piste more than ever this year.... more piste than Stumpy gets!

Talk of the devil, Stumpy rears his little round head everywhere doesn't he. He's got a new job as a teacher in a school where the letters "I" and "Q" have never been heard of and has to literally beat the kids into submission. All that training on the Cardiff wall must be coming in handy. He is looking for a new job. Charlie Lister was last known to be working on quality control of bricks at a brick yard. He is required to measure all the bricks with calipers! Rich Lewis (whose membership has lapsed) wishes to say that he has not really deserted us but has to many other commitments just now. He gives his regards. He works as a Senior Marketing Officer in Sheffield.



Dave and Fran are still going strong and even getting out and upto outdoor things. They are off sailing round Norfolk ( the coast ?) in the summer, Scotland at easter and a trip out with the Girl Guides has also been mentioned. Is this for Dave or for Fran? Paul and Vicky Hildreth also wrote to Bill with information on their travels to distant parts - this time to Annapurna, or perhaps I should more accurately say the "Annapurna Circuit" which took them 20 days trekking. They comment that it's high rating as walks go was completely justified.

Since opening this section with news on marriages and house moves more information on this topic has come to light. Pete Butler a former member who has written to Bill to rejoin us announces that his bachelor days are over and that he too has bought a house. Then there is Julian Ward who has been sent by his company to work in Nigeria for 3 years. He got married to a Danish lass whilst we were sitting down to our annual nosh-up last November. He says that there are some good crags over there on the Jos Plateau - could this be the venue we've been looking for for Stumpies "Big Trip"? (See Club News section).

Blutes has also got a new address 'though he has not , so far as I know, got married. He has a new job as a fireman and appologises for not being able to attend the coming work weekend due to being on a training course. He is, incidently, about to fit a new chimney to the stove ..... lets hope it cures the smoke problem.

Last but not least we come to Ant who fled our green and pleasant land as he was fed up with having to always give the speech at the Dinner. His letter says how he is enjoying star gazing at Ontario and that he welcomes any visitors provided they come supplied with a). a sleeping bag and b). a bottle of Malt Whisky. There are apparently some crags not so far away but that they tend to be a little damp due to the close proximity of Niagra Falls. He thinks it could be quite good in winter if only it were to freeze!

As ever all news and gossip is welcomed for this section of the 'letter and can be sent to me or Carolyn.

## THE DINNER

SOCIAL GATHERINGS require a raison d'etre; they need a focal point. The human being, since the Stone Age, has gathered around a fire. The fire provided warmth and protection but it also gave that psychologically pleasing feeling of a focal point; a reason to be there.

The Annual Dinner is a similaïr such event; we do not come simply to eat (if we did, surely we would dine at Pete's Eats), we come to meet. Indeed some refer to it as the 'Dinner Meet'; the meeting is more important than the meal. Perhaps this is the reason for the conservative quantities of food we are given; our hosts clearly perceive that we come mainly to meet and not eat. This would acco'nt for there gross negligence in their attention to quantity.

If the reader will permit me to use an analogy here of the fire the human gathers around, as mentioned above. If Pete's Eats is a raging fire, then the Cobdens would be a used match, re-lit and pissed upon.

Although I must eat more dinners in a year than an Ethiopian restaurant owners family, those two words, 'the Dinner', bring to my mind a blur of alcohol, condoms, a little food, and a wet Welsh weekend. I wondered whether, with the new stove and lock at the hut, and with a multitude of new and re-accepted members, would the 1988 dinner herald anything new and different. The answer was clear as soon as we entered the Cobdens- a singular negative; Revell was arse-holed. Apart from a few Bavarian influences from Stumpy and Revell (viz. afternoon drinking and the the large, friendly letters of 'Hütten Buche' enscribed neatly on the log book), the evening began as usual. Bill made his annual valiant attempt at trying to remember the names and faces of the new members. Stumpy reminisced the same misfortunes of people he'd reminisced about last year. Chris was sure he'd bought the last round last year so it must be somebody else's shout. Revell was trying to remember how much he'd drunk since lunch-time; was it 12 pints or 12 litres? Yes, this was X-Aber.

Although Paul Daniels manages it once a week, Mr Owen's annual unveiling of his new tricks (and repeated old ones) is worth waiting for. This year we had two new releases. The first was a budget preview of "A Fish Called Wanda". Where Michael Palin had chips up his nose, and not even a bagful at that, Stumps managed a full box of matches, with only the use of his lips and tongue. The second trick I have seen emulated, though never successfully, in England, Wales and Scotland. The complexity of this requires a diagram, suffice it to say that a pint of beer is an integral part of the trick.



Keeping this piece in as chronological order as my memory permits, we were then I believe, served with 'dinner'.

After this lengthy, wholesome and no-more-for-me-thanks-I'm-full-up meal, the hour-and it almost was-arrived for the after-dinner speeches.

Bill took the floor first, then stood up and welcomed the new members to the club and the Return of Rastus (aka Paul Metcalfe). "The lesson had been learnt" and as surely as Paul knew from school that two plus two equals five, he now knew not to fuck with X-Aber MC.

Bill trebled as Financial Director, Accountant and Auditor and informed us of X-Aber plc Holdings Inc. and its financial position for the tax year 1987/88. It seemed that we were £50.00 up (from a Maggie Bond or something). However this was soon to be given, in advance, to the local Mountain Rescue team, for services they will have to render (someone, surely, at some time get stuck on a ledge with Revell). With such rapidly fluctuating capital funds, I think we all learnt two important lessons of monetary flows and capital gains:

1. Don't count your money until you've drunk it.
2. Being nice loses you cash.

With the only AGM-ish part of the evening over, Bill droned on for a few more minutes, wobbled, and then sat down.

The next speaker had only recently returned from a long hillwalking trip with his wife. This I could understand but I became rather confused about the sport they had been pursuing. It appeared they had been catching things, and apparently they had caught quite a lot. Whether this 'sport' is ethically or environmentally-sound is for the reader to decide, but he had 'bagged' a number of 'Munroes'. Now these may have been eaten, stuffed or smoked, but the most important part of it all was the bottle of Champagne (Winfield '88) on offer to the closest guess of how far they walked during the 'bagging' period. Now they must have walked pretty far to have caught all the Munroes, unless of course all these Munroes nest in one micro-environment. (Indeed, for all we know, they may all live on one leaf of a bush outside the Cobdens. If this is the case then I must raise the following objections:

1. It's very unfair for anyone else who may want to bag any Munroes.
2. They can't have walked very far at all. Indeed, a sport cannot be called a sport when a full-bladdered drinker could bag all these Munroes simply by pissing on a leaf.

This seems to have digressed somewhat from the dinner.

Usually it is convention for a writer to have observed and noted events in an objective manner. I must therefore apologise for being pissed and for not being able to accurately relate what occurred on the night of the dinner.

With this remark in mind, I can only remember the continent, not the country the next speaker had visited. Africa.

Finally, up stood our own Eddie the Eagle, Stumpy the Sparrow. Known by his enemies as Mr I Owen. Another year and another yarn. Most of us had heard the story before (or read it in the log), but even so, when Owen gets into a good tale, who can do anything but listen (apart from Revell)?

This year was the almost Sunday Sport headline story: "How I Was Stuck on a Ledge on the Durexspitzen With Revell Without Even the Fishing Game to Keep Us From Going Mad." (The full account can be found in the Log(Hutten Buche edition) Vol.XII. pp 57-83).

The meal was marginally improved on last year and in now traditional form, Mr Owen complimented the Hotel on their unique style of having the after-dinner speeches between the starter and main course. Last year he'd mentioned something about a calorie-controlled diet, but a quick scan of his psyche offered no evidence of this.

Stumpy muttered on some more; about what I'm not sure, but he eventually sat down. The After Eight mint was served and shared amongst us all leaving us to go to the bar and get pissed.or have a hair of the dog in Mr Revell's case.

I think it should be noted at this point that I was not the 'chosen one' to do the article. The honour was first offered by Neil to Suzy. That night I received a worried phone call; "how the hell can I write an article, I can't remember anything except arriving! Can't you do it, please!"

I should again emphasize at this point that my objectivity is decreasing as we move through this article. Even so, I do have a strong recollection of Suzy's state that night, and I've never seen her like that. Anyway, unbeknown to me, Suzy had corresponded with Neil and recommended me as a possible writer. Thus, although I had declined Suzy's offer, who, when called upon by the ClubSecretary, could turn down the opportunity of serving the club magazine? I tried but failed.

From what I can recall of the rest of the evening the Revellries continued there were no chainsaws and I woke up to a hangover, black coffee and a packet of Resolve.

PAUL CLARK



## A VIEW FROM THE BOOT

I have often asked myself what the difference is between walkers and climbers. I now think I can provide an answer. Is it that walkers can get away with using two points of contact for most of the time, or that they do not sit around in the pub all night, talking about the merits of using chalk, or even that they go out when it's raining? I can safely say that it is none of these things. In fact the real difference is in their attitude.

Climbers are active go-getting, highly motivated rock athletes, who strive to reach the limits of their performance. They live for the adrenalin fix and accept the danger. Walkers, on the other hand, are none of these things - In fact they are mind numbingly dull people, perhaps second only in tedium to train spotters. Their days spent tramping the hills are only enlivened by the occasional thrill of a broken bootlace or a really septic blister.

I say this because I know - I am one of them! Having spent 39 days between March and November last year walking up and down all the 2000 foot summits in Wales I am convinced I must have a screw loose somewhere.

The plan was to climb all the 2000 foot or 610 metre summits listed in "The mountains of Wales", by Terry Marsh. His definition of a summit was anything with at least 30 metres of re-ascent from all directions, so this ruled out any that you walk down hill to. On the whole his list was quite good, though there were one or two dubious classifications.

But why undertake such a gargantuan task? I asked Helen, my partner in this activity, for it was as much her walk as mine, and neither of us really knew, but she blames me! In retrospect, I must have been partially crazy to spend a lot of my free time wandering around Wales in all weathers, with usually only a passing sheep for company, but occasionally with Helen and once even with Stumpy.

This was an opportunity to visit some of the less well known and less well visited upland areas of Wales. I can now report that the reason some of them are less well known is that they are not worth going to in the first place. But many areas are well worth the effort to get there.

So I would like to present my personal selection of the best and worst of the lesser known Welsh mountains.

### THE BEST

At the top of the list is the Black Mountains. The walk from north of Lanbedr (SO229251) to Mynydd Llysiau (663m), Pen Twyn Glas (646m), Pen Allt-mawr (719m) and Pen Cerrig-calch (701m), on a sunny Monday afternoon in June was one of the highlights of the year. There were good views over to the Beacons and the countryside around Abergavenny. [19Km, 611m ascent].

Another area well worth a visit, especially if at a loose end in Aberystwyth, is the Elan Valley. There are two summits - Gorllwyn (613m) and Drygarn Fawr (645m) which can be reached in a triangular walk from Rhiwnant (SN900616). It is a long walk through fairly featureless terrain and requires good visibility for navigation. But, on a crisp and bright November afternoon the views across to Plynlimion and beyond to the north (Plynlimion has 7 summits listed over 2000 feet); and to the south the Black Mountains, Brecon Beacons, Mynydd Du and Fforest Fawr, were amazing and well worth the trudge involved. [18Km, 558m ascent].

To prove that the sun does not always have to shine to have a good day, whilst climbing Cader Idris (7 summits) Helen and I had to put up with wind, rain, hail, thunder, lightning and occasional sun. Our walk from the top of the pass between the Cross Foxes and Tal-y-llyn lake to Llanfihangel-y-Pennant was good. But, we were able to see an even better route along the ridge starting near the Cross Foxes and going west over Cader to the coast near Llwyngwrl. This is something to try out this year.

At this point I should point out that if you arrange to meet someone in the car park by the river in Dolgellau, make sure you specify which of the two car parks you mean. We spent an hour or so in our respective car parks waiting for each other!

The Rhinogs occur in both the best and the worst categories. Moel Ysgyfarnogod has an amazing limestone pavement like topography, which is well worth a visit. The route from Llyn Trawsfynydd (SH684359) is around 7km with 410m of ascent.

### THE WORST

Rhinog Fawr must be one of the wettest, gloomiest, most difficult under foot mountains ever invented. Also, the fact that it never stopped raining earns it the all time worst award.

The Berwyn Hills are a large, diffuse range of rolling, heather clad moorland hills overlooking Bala. Terry Marsh puts them into the category of 'sheer purgatory'. They are so uninteresting - being mostly bog, heather or sheep, or even all three at once - that even the Ordnance Survey missed some of them out in their hurry to get away from the place.

Other areas to avoid are some of the outlying Arenigs, though Arenig Fach (689m) and Carnedd y Filiast (669m) count as the most entertaining. It was here that Stumpy jumped across the Afon Gelyn, but didn't quite make it! Some may say that Stumpy wet from the waist down is no great loss to humanity, but I think that would be a great calumny.

The best day though was the last. At 3.00pm on the 26th November we opened the champagne at the top of a cold and icy, but clear Moel Siabod. I think that the other people who saw us dancing around the summit must definitely have thought we were a bit odd.



## THE COMPETITION

As Helen turned her epic into a sponsored walk for Nicaragua, I decided I must get in on the act. I asked people to guess how far I walked to complete all the 163 summits. Each guess was accompanied by a donation to the Ogwyn Valley Mountain Rescue Appeal with the winner receiving a bottle of champagne.

The total distance I walked was 378 miles with 21 miles of ascent and it took 39 days. So far I have raised around £130.

The winner is none other than our own beloved Stumpy, with a guess of 396.7 miles. Congratulations to Stumpy and thank you to all those who donated money.

Finally I would like to thank Helen and Geoff for all their help and encouragement and for the numerous times I slept behind their sofa in Aberdare.

As for this year - I was planning a trip to the Rockies - but I might take up train spotting instead!

Love and hugs

Mark



Gritstone solitude  
on Yrth (E.2.1).  
Shining Clough  
(Bleaklow Moor).

## SPRINT BEN



It is time once again to report on the activities of club members. However, since trying to get news from you lot is like trying to get a pint out of Neil, it is going to consist, as usual, of the same old drivel and bullshit about the same people doing the same mundane things .....or is it ???

By this stage in the year I had hoped for tales of Winter epics on the Ben or at least the Trinities, but the global warming taking place (due to release of excessive CFCs at Dinner Meets) means that instead of the traditional four seasons that we used to enjoy, we now have only one that apparently exists in various stages of coldness, wetness and windiness, and those of you dull enough to have bought a new winter guide to anywhere this season can at least rest assured that you will have a mint condition collectors item in 20 years time...I suppose that some masochistic individual has found some sodden gully to hack up (Mr Hooker? - 'nuff said) but there is no confirmed news. at least the mild weather should have meant people were able to spend time on the crag....or did it?

Revell gets the first mention as he is claiming the last ascent of '88 - finishing up some gritstone classic near Kinder in the dark on Dec 31<sup>st</sup>. It seems he is starting his alpine training early this year!! His only other route this year was *Grooved Arete* on Tryfan in the company of Owen Burt and Stumpy.

Other news is rather sketchy to say the least. Al Boyd having made a trip to Buoux (which may even have been last Summer) where his time was spent "just doing things we liked the look of". Also in France, Ned has been to the Verdon Gorge where by his own admission he spent half his time scared shitless. his travels have also taken him to Handegg in Switzerland and has also come home with glowing reports of Freyr in Belgium - a closer option than Cloggy if you're south of the Watford Gap.

Patiently waiting for the snow and ice formation has been Rastus, but again there is no definite news apart from his having done *Barbarian* at Tremadoc and various other routes in the company of a mystery woman.

As usual there is no news from Rich Lewis apart from turning up at Neds stag weekend at the hut, getting VERY pissed and then proceeding to throw up over anything that came within 3' of him.



Ding has been up to a few routes, a couple of the harder ones being *Doubting Thomas* (Malham), *Traffic Jam* (Stoney) and *Hitlers Buttock* (Tremadoc). He also attempted *Clean Sweep* at Wilton, where, my eyewitness reporter tells me, the only sweep he made was a 30' radius arc when he lobbed head first off a traverse. Where the 'clean' comes in I don't know but it certainly has nothing to do with the subsequent state of his grits. Injury (as usual....zzzzzzz...) has put a temporary halt to proceedings.

Neil has been up to a route or two including *Silly Arete* at Tremadoc and on THE SLATE!!! has done (after repeated failure) *The Dervish* which he grudgingly admits is a real classic.

Talking of classics, he has been mopping up plenty of them in the Peak which he has saved up carefully for his old age. This include *Sirplum* and *Regent Street* and some sort of excursion on the *Bangler/Unprintable* or whatever. He has also spent much time failing, nothing new here I may add, but has decided to counter this by spending 'some' (his words!) time on the wall in Sheffield. This was brought to light by two of my undercover reporters, who spotted him oozing effortlessly along the traverse with the grace of someone who knows every hold backwards indicating that Neils 'some time' may have been somewhat understated. This can't be the same Neil Plant who abhors all training? Anyway, they observed him for some time before their cover was blown, at which point sudden fatigue and bad style set in and neil fell off grunting and puffing, stressing that he "only comes here for the odd session". However one of his (now ex-) friends pointed out that the odd session extended to several a day.....how the ethical fall...."I'll never use chalk" he once boasted.....

As for myself there is no news of any major activity. The odd visit to the hut before Xmas yielded a few routes at Pen Trywyn and the Slate but since then its only been the one route with Revell and Burt and one with Ned.

Blutes has been out walking whenever he can and is due to become a fireman in April. We could have done with him at Neds weekend as he reported to be rather distressed and under heavy sedation after the near destruction of his beloved stove. The "Dirty Dozen" were in attendance at this momentous occasion, where they enjoyed a feast of roast ox, wine, Champagne, followed by more beer and whisky than was wise. During a slurred speech by the bride er, groom to be, an aerosol can inadvertently found its way on to a blazing fire. Now, whilst the propellant may have been alleged not to damage the ozone layer, it made no claims about it not causing damage to the XABA or its occupants. The EXPLOSION and FIREBALL that ensued had to be seen to be believed. very fortunately, we all lived to tell the tale and even Red Adair was at hand disguised as Mick Green, to pour buckets of water over what remained of the stove and lounge and avert any further disaster. Sunday was a bit of an anticlimax really and was spent feeling ill, cleaning pits (courtesy Dick 'airs) and trying to rebuild the stove and lounge.

Last and most definitely last is news that at the time of writing, Sparrow and Phil England are in Nepal, doing the Everest Double Glazing Base Camp walk with a diversion to climb *Island Peak*. All of this was organised by one of Sparrows old teachers and they hope to take just 3 weeks so by the time you get this they will be home just dying to bore you to death with thousands of snowy photos and tales of 101 things to do with (or to) a yak! Good luck to them.

On the subject of walking, I can't miss out Helen and Mark who are now well into their round of the 5 foot peaks in East Anglia having completed at the last report, 8 of the dozen or so that they could find - only joking chaps, but you deserve a mention and it can only be a matter of time before withdrawal symptoms set in and an even more fiendishly silly plan is hatched!

No other mountain news to hand although several parties have been skiing including Bill and Geoff. Smeglette seemed to have some wierd sexual designs on skis saying something about bumming (?????) but I may have misinterpreted what he really said.

He has once again been timewarped out of this galaxy along with the Clark brothers who were last seen heading south along the A5 in a shagged out van.

Anyway, Spring should have sprung soon and once again the sun will bathe the crags of these Isles. Some hope, but if it does then get out and do your stuff, and for F\*\*\*\* sake get ANY news to me or Neil for inclusion in the next rag - even if it is to report your 25<sup>th</sup> ascent of Oberon. So, metaphorically speaking, keep your boots on (ouch!)

Happy climbing/walking/skiing/bridge jumping/dossing

Cheers.

Stumpy

#### SPECIAL NOTICE

A great time was had by all who attended a certain stag night celebration at X-ABA the other day but the fact that the poor boys speech went off with a bang has concerned one or two people. It must be stressed that those who have contacted me to complain are not kill-joys and do enjoy a good bit of vigorous fun themselves. However, it has been decided, (without vote), that NO MORE AEROSOLS. EMPTY OR FULL ARE TO BE PUT IN THE STOVE. The remains of the stove have been pieced back together.



# LOS PANTALONES COMPLETORS

If you have ever found yourself slogging up Great Gully on a torrential Welsh summers day because there is nothing else to do it may have crossed your mind that there has to be an alternative. Just dream of warm sun, clear skies, great climbing and of course chips and beans ... and yes you guessed it, this winter we would be Benidorm bound. Who would have said five years ago that you would find a wealth of climbing along the Costa Blanca. The routes are of all grades, of seriousness and of setting.

But lets not bother with the climbing as there is something much more fun to do on your Spanish holiday. I believe I'm correct in saying that one or two Club members have already sampled the delights of bridge jumping. It's a relatively simple sport. You don't need skill, fitness, brains or brawn, just strong elastic in your underwear.

I must admit that after reading a few of the recent articles on the subject myself and a few friends had certainly contemplated the idea. Unfortunately every bridge you find down here in the south west just doesn't seem high enough. A jump would be a simple plummet to ground zero. However, in a little gorge (it's a 1000' deep), near Benidorm there are two bridges, both about 200' above a dry boulder bed. The old disused road bridge cuts straight across in a single arch. The new bridge is about ten feet higher and runs at an angle of about 25 degrees to the old. At one side they are 60' apart and at the other 260'.

Now it just so happens that if you line yourself up with the centre of the old bridge arch whilst standing on the new they are separated by 130 feet. Convenient. Attatch to one end and jump..... it sounded so easy.

Being a smart Alec I suggested to my three friends that we had a go. Now for some stupid reason I bagged first place. When you stand above the void for the first time you are glad that you've told everyone back home you are going to do it or you would bottle out.

We were expecting a wire cable around the bridge parapet to tie onto but it wasn't there, so it was thinking caps on. We wrapped one rope four times round the parapet by

way of a drainage hole and pulled the loops three-quarters of the way across the bridge. The two jumping ropes were then attached to these by stitch plates and draped over the near side parapet. A pillow from the apartment laid on the edge over which the ropes run is advisable.

Now it is time to go. Andy, via a terrace, throws the ropes across and you walk them out with you to the take off point. With about 6' of rope left you reach a red dot on the kerb stone. The rope feels heavy. With assistance you clip into the railings and tie onto the ropes. Once this is done Alan takes in the slack and ties of the ropes. You are now pulled up tight to the railings. Mouth dry you step over. Andy unclips the railings tape and mutters something about being bloody stupid. Once this is done you are all dressed up and with only one way to go. Holding on is hard as the ropes really pull. Things feel funny - because of the angle you are facing the wrong way. It's now or never. I hope that Simon gets the photos - GO!!!!

Oh that awful feeling of acceleration! The ropes are loose and you just free fall. Terminal velocity here we come. Don't ask about the arch approaching. All I saw was the gorge rushing upwards.

Things go black then you are travelling upwards into daylight. Wow! I'm still here! One massive scream and it's unclip the camera for the two or three big swings before you start to slow down.

Forget what it says in the mags - the ropes don't reach the ground. A double rope is lowered down and you tie on. Ease off on the jumping ropes, untie and lower the last 30' to the ground. Terra firma at last.

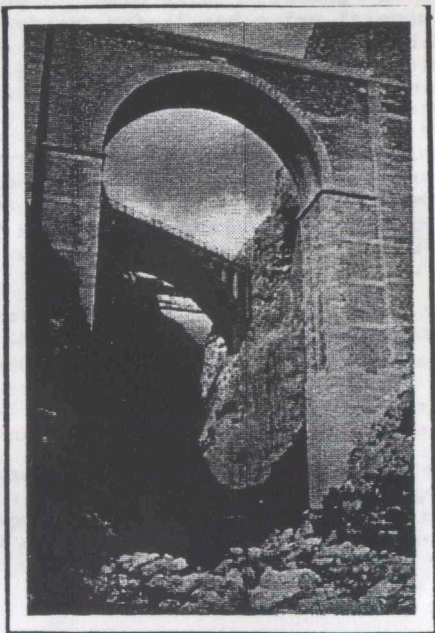
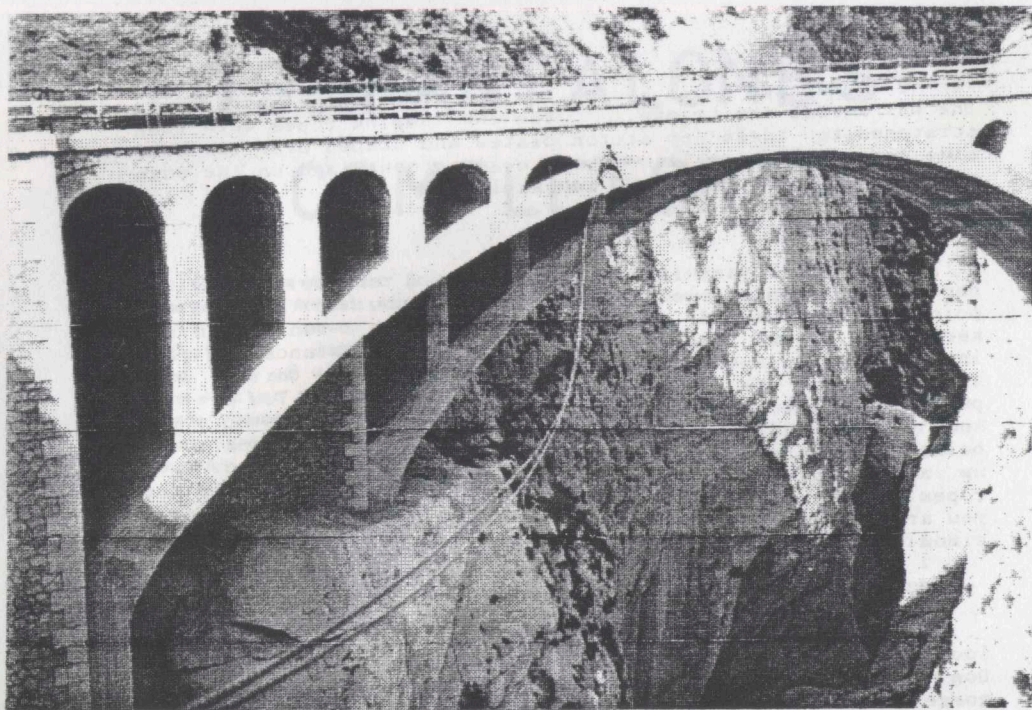
I'm not sure about other belays but ours worked safely for all four of us. The police stopped us after two jumps but the other two went the following morning. They are not worried about the jumping but about the traffic that stops to watch. The passers by are right - it is crazy but it's better than sex. We went in late January. Air flight return to Alicante was £70. Car hire £120. The apartment (Sept 7) and was £112 for 7 days. Three course meals at around £11.

Do the jump. You definitely won't forget it!!

LOS PANTALONES COMPLETORS .... the trouser filler.

Paul Tinsley





## A (Half) Trans-Africa Trip by Howard and Denise Nicholls

Having left our jobs, sold our house, and failed to sell our rusty Ford Cortina, we set off for the Dark continent from Portsmouth harbour in late September 1987. Never having been to Africa before, and intending to go across most of the continent, we had decided to go with an established company, Guerba Expeditions, rather than travel under our own steam. This worked out well, as it was Guerba's leaf spring which needed replacing in Zaire, their differential which needed mending in Nairobi, their tents which ended up covered in squashed mosquitos, and their driver who was flown back with hepatitis. The passengers were a mix of Canadians, Australians, Americans, and Brits, all kept in order by a Dutch driver (married to the Canadian cook) assisted by a British co-driver.

A week of driving took us through France and Spain to Gibraltar, where we stocked up on cheap drink, cameras, and watches ready for the short trip across the Straits to Morocco. We could tell we were in Africa when we all packed in to the back room of a petrol station to change money on the black market, surrounded by piles of bank notes and oil cans. Freshly sweaty palms clutching illicit bank notes, we made first for Fes, where carpet sellers tried their best to to relieve us of same. One vendor did even better, and persuaded the American couple to use their Visa card to the tune of \$1000. Being skin flint Brits, Denise and I settled for a small rug costing £37, now proudly adorning our living room wall.

From Fes, we proceeded through arid countryside to Marrakesh, where we were accosted by snake charmers demanding money with menaces, and beggars at every corner. By this time we were settling in to the Arab way of bargaining, and were only being mildly ripped off rather than grossly ripped off. The leather goods here really are of a fine quality and cheap by UK prices, once you've reduced the starting price by 200%.

Our next excursion was into the High Atlas for an attempt on Mount Toubkhal, the highest in North Africa at about 13000ft. From our base at Imlil, 13 of us trudged uphill to the Neltner Hut, a solid Alpine-style hut with bunks and cookers. Denise slipped on the only river crossing on the route, spraining her ankle and rendering herself unable to walk. She was first up to the hut, however, with the aid of a handy mule, and greeted us with hot tea. The summit ascent the next morning saw only 10 of us setting out, and we quickly lost another two due to altitude sickness. Gradually more people dropped out, until only three of us were standing on the summit, minus our local guide who was suffering from a surfeit of Alpen somewhere lower down. The route we did had no technical difficulty, but the uphill slog was compensated for by the superb views from the top across to the Middle Atlas and to the Spanish Sahara. There is stacks of rock climbing here, plenty of skiing, and a network of huts enabling a high-level traverse of the High Atlas range. We have plans to go back sometime for another look. I'm sure Bill has a few tales to tell about this area too.



Having dealt with Toubkhal, we travelled north east into Algeria and spent a week in Algiers lounging around on the Mediterranean beaches waiting for Nigerian visas. Armed with suntans and sand mats we then set off for 1500 miles due south across the Sahara to the market place of the desert, Tamanrasset. Most people expect the desert to be made up of sand dunes, and whilst parts of it are, there is a surprising amount of rock. Crossing the Tademait Plateau was like being in a hot Iceland: a featureless plateau of black lava blasted by heat and sand; further south, rock outcrops were common and every day the scenery changed in some way.

In Tam. we hired a Toyota Landcruiser (the Japs have taken over here) complete with turban-wearing Touareg tribesman driver, resplendent in his mirror sunglasses. He took us out to the refuge of French hermit Charles deFoucauld, at the Assakrem in the 8000ft Hoggar mountains. deFoucauld was murdered by Touaregs in the first world war, suspected of being a spy. Here we watched the sun rise over the Hoggar range, the most beautiful yet desolate scene either of us have ever seen, with peaks marching off in all directions, devoid of vegetation and unsullied by human habitation for 50 miles.

South of Tamanrasset we met more sand, getting our 4wd Bedford truck stuck a few times but it was pushed free without recourse to the sand mats, much to everyone's disappointment. Eventually we met a few oil cans and a wooden hut surrounded by desert; this was the Algeria/Niger border. It took us a day to get through, having had to spread all our belongings out in the open for security inspection, and have the truck searched on both sides of the imaginary line in the sand. As we headed for Agadez, grass and thorn trees began to appear and we found ourselves travelling through the Sahel, the 500 mile deep band of drought region that spreads across the girdle of Africa. It was very obvious that the edges of the Sahel would soon be part of the desert proper.

In Agadez we had our first beer for weeks, and discovered an Italian-style ice cream parlour run by a Frenchman, one of the few Westernised features of this ancient trading town. Equipped with genuine Fulani tribesman's sword (made out an oil drum), we travelled on into Nigeria, to Kano, where we re-acquainted ourselves with the flavour of bottled Guinness. 'Brewed in Nigeria and Dublin' so it said on the label, and sold with the cunning slogan 'black is beautiful.'

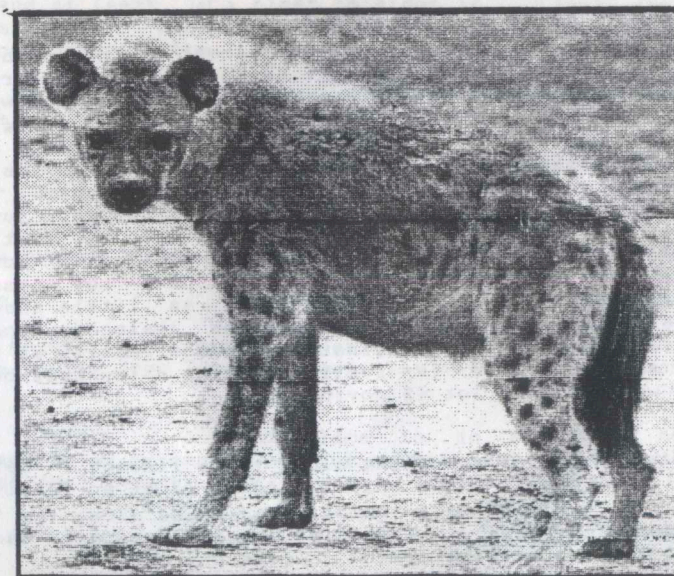
From uneventful Nigeria, we passed into N.W. Cameroon, a land of rugged landscapes made of grass-covered volcanic plugs and steep sided valleys. We only spent two days in the top corner of this very poor country, but found the people always friendly and curious. This did nothing to prepare us for the Central African Republic, a country we never wish to visit again. It is left in turmoil after the deposing of its self-styled 'Emperor' Bokassa, currently on trial for murder and accused of cannibalism by some. In the capital, Bangui, our truck was robbed. The villains used an interesting diversionary tactic of having three men attempt to climb in the back whilst a fourth man smashed the cab window and grabbed a bag containing money and documents. We later bought the documents back,

from a person who had 'found' them in the street. Police stops everywhere, and an uneasy atmosphere to the land. We left C.A.R. with relief for the giant country of Zaire and the jungle.

We then had four weeks of battling through mud-filled jungle roads, driving as little as 20 miles a day. The Bedford became bogged down many times, and the sand mats finally came into use, laid on top of logs to provide a firm base on which to drive out of mudholes. Cleanliness became a thing of the past, with everyone regularly up to their knees in mud, digging out the truck which was usually stuck axle-deep. Hard going, but the kind of thing we were glad to have done, afterwards. On our way through the jungle, we came across Pygmies, the rare Okapi (an animal with striped legs but related to the giraffe), a large number of voracious ants and biting black flies, and visited the Kahuzi Biega sanctuary, where we saw giant silver-backed gorillas. Eastern Zaire is volcanic, being on the edge of the African Rift, and so we took the chance to climb a 10000ft active volcano. Being on the top was bizarre, as we were in a hail storm, looking into a sulphurous crater on one side and lush jungle vegetation on the other, just half a degree south of the equator.

After C.A.R. and Zaire, the rest was easy going and fun. We spent about a month cruising through Tanzania and the Kenyan game parks, spotting strangely named birds such as the lilac breasted roller and the white bellied go-away bird, plus all the usual African game.

Thus we arrived in Nairobi, 8500 miles from Gibraltar, browned and battered and with something else with which we hadn't set out. A doctor confirmed our suspicions: Denise was three months pregnant. Nigeria wasn't as uneventful as implied earlier and our son Peter had already begun to make his mark. We flew back to London a week later, covering the distance it had taken us 4 months to travel overland in just 16 hours.





# TROUBLE <sup>on</sup> the TRINGBERG

The curtain opens on Stumpy and Revell who have slept well in the Sphinx tunnel on the Jungfrauoch after a straightforward traverse of the Monch ridges. They breakfast and then stride off purposefully into the approaching dawn across the crisp snowfield that leads to the huge fin of rock and ice known as "the biggest heap of rubble north of the Matterhorn" but actually called the Tingberg.

Dawn coincided with the arrival at the north end of the Tringberg and time to put on harnesses etc because Revell was sick of carrying the rope. The first section is a narrow snow crest which rises steeply from the snowfield below. So far so good, but the problems start when the ridge turns rocky. It seems to the climber on it that every rock will loosen and send you down a couple of thousand feet to the snows below. Gendarmes arrived in a never ending supply to force us off the ridge; no sooner had one detour been corrected than another crumbling tower blocked the way. None of the climbing is difficult but the uncertainty, the looseness and the drop make you pitch the damned thing against your better judgement. No obviously used holds here, no crampon scratches to reassure us on the rubble, no foot prints in the snow sections. And the gendarmes keep coming; soul destroying climbing at its worst.

A couple of hours outside the guidebook time the summit is reached after several false ones). No joy, no one to share mutual congratulation with. Owen celebrates with a shit and Revell smokes a fag and wants to get down. An old ring peg was the only thing seen all day to tell of previous struggles. It's the alpine equivalent of Craig Dhu - everyone knows where it is but no one climbs there.

About 2pm and time to go. The descent to the south end of the Tingberg is an F+ snow slope that heads into a huge bergschrund but which can be turned via a narrow snow path between where the 'schrund peters out and vertical ice cliffs begin. A big zig-zag seems the best way to avoid the steepness and it should be plain sailing. 150' pitches with ice axe belays but the snow is soft at that time of day... wet with the consistency of damp sugar. Nothing bites, tools and points just sink. Don't worry though, just keep going. Nearly there now, just a few rope lengths to the flat run out following the 'schrund round, looking at the ice with bottomless black space below. Not far to the ice cliffs now - why doesn't that 'schrund close? Nerves are already on edge as little snow slides follow our every step .... imagination creates avalanches and gaping holes at our feet. But then imagination becomes reality as the snow starts moving and the water is really running a few feet below the surface. The whole bloody lot IS moving!!

The dialogue goes something along these lines... "Get across the 'schrund!". "I can't - it's only 2" ice". "Just go for it. JUMP" "No F..... way!!!" We make tentative advances along the 'schrund then the movement increases. Ian whips out his axe belay and starts running. Paul follows at high speed. "Come on, come on". "Where?"

"Up". "The rocks". "I can't go on". "Come on, come on". Thoughts of several tonnes of wet snow on top of you as you go over the ice cliff. What was it I was reading about how to cope in an avalanche? Shit, it's all useless. We make the rocks or die. Rocks, rocks I love you. Solid. Stability. Belays. Life.

It was now nearly 4 o'clock. We are surrounded by an extremely unstable snow slope with ice cliffs on one side and the impassable 'schrund on the other separating us from the safe zone 300m below. Food is a tin of Mackerel and 6 squares of chocolate each and half a litre of water. We both have duvets. The helicopter will not be needed.

Thirteen hours later the long night of the bivvy is over. The snow is now ice and we can go joyously knocking in ice screws as bomb proof belays. We're out! We plod to base to lick our wounds. An epic but controlled and escaped. After 13 hours on the belay we were dehydrated beyond belief and painfully burnt. Another 4000m peak tomorrow! I can't get over the adrenaline the fear produced but well, when the going got tough the tough just sit it out till it freezes.

## A ROUGH GUIDE TO GRINDELWALD

If you are thinking of a trip to the Bernese Alps here are a few facts that may be of interest.

What's there? Eiger, Monch, Jungfrau, Fiescherhorn, Wetterhorn etc. Lots of walks and the famous mountain railway through the Eiger to 12,000' at the Jungfrau. Also lots of skiing in winter.

Where to stay. There are three campsites in the valley. Gletscherdorf is the nearest town 10 mins walk away. Cost is about 3 per person per night with a car. Numerous huts open all day for walkers and at least 10 a night to sleep in. There are bivvy sites round most huts. Excellent doss at the Sphinx railway tunnel and at Kleine Scheidegg station.

Eating. On average about as for here 'though cafes are expensive.

Off days. Good sports centre with pool, climbing wall and ice rink. Lots of shops and gear shops.

Weather. Supposed to be bad but we did O.K. - best to get the phone number of the Zurich Met Office from the guides bureau in the main street then ask the tourist information office to ring up and translate.

Guides, maps, routes. Collomb Guide is best. Buy maps here. There are routes from F to ED+ but stay off the Weizenbach!!

SUMMARY A good place to go and don't be afraid of Switzerland being pricey. Good for mountaineers of all standards but not so hot for Chamonix rock - jocks. A nice place to be.

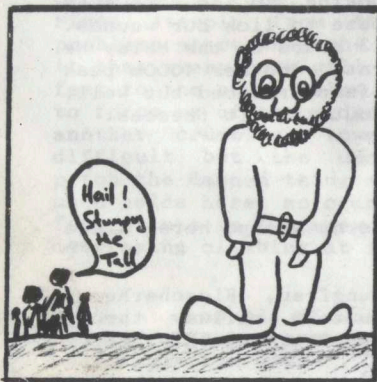
PAUL REVELL.



# STUMPY'S REVENGE

Ian Owen was born in a quiet little marsh somewhere back in the eons of time. He was one of the original Welsh Bog People. Living off a diet of maggots and welsh cakes he slowly grew in size and stature to the point where all his people could look up to him. They called him their King and Master, Stumpy the Tall.

But Stumpy was unhappy. He wanted to see the world and meet human beings about which he had heard and avenge himself against them for they had done him wrong. So he left his kingdom and went in search of the land of men and after many years of wandering he came to a small steamy building beside a desolate place and here met a man called Pete who immediately served him a pint of tea and a chip butty. Travel weary Stumpy slumped into the corner and with his saber cut the butty in two and ate it. As he sat he glanced up through his little round spectacles and saw a Sparrow hopping to his table. "Pray Sir, My Lord, give me a chip" said the Sparrow, "and I will tell you how to find the man who has done you wrong". Stumpy, King of the Bog could understand the tongues of animals and birds and he spoke unto the Sparrow "Get lost you whimpering little turd - tell me first then I may give you a chip". The sparrow was no match for the King of Bogs and so he told his story.



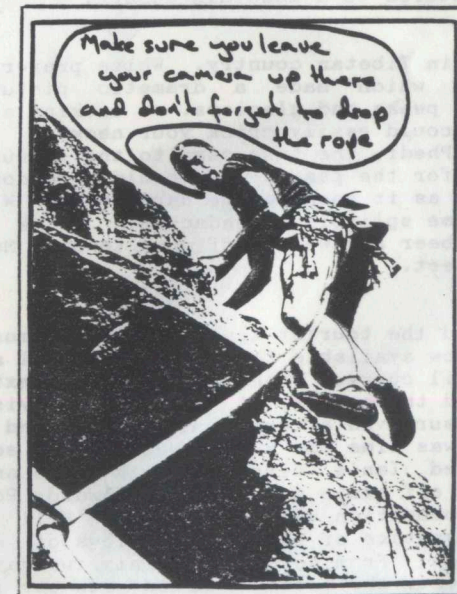
"Long ago there came to these parts a funny little animal whose name was Old Stumpy, first King of the Bogs and ruler of all things in the low life. He came on a quest to find out how to become tall like human beings and went in search of Grond who knows all things. Now Grond lives on a ledge high above a wild and dangerous valley where savage sheep roamed the wild slopes and ate things, especially Bog People. Fearless, Stumpy set off in the driving rain on his trusty steed called Cemetery Gates. He made his way upward through the clag until finally he saw the ledge but his way was barred by a huge vertical wall. Stumpy, try as he may could not over come this wall. Over and over again he tried but to no avail. Just then a strange spindly man with a funny voice and wearing a uniform came by. "I am a Botting and will do or die for you on that wall". So up went the Botting effortlessly gliding it's weightless form up the wall. "Come on now" it cried and so Stumpy set off once more upon the wall. The Botting pulled the rope and Stumpy's feet slithered and slipped their way up untill just below the top where he got stuck again. He wept and he cried, he huffed and he puffed, but it was no use. "I say, bad luck old chap" said the Botting and lowered the weary King of the Bog back down the wall.

"Well just then out leapt the Grond who did not like his lands being occupied by funny spindly men in uniforms and chased the Botting away. However, by a stroke of pure luck the Book of All Things fell from the ledge and crashed to the ground by Stumpy. Quickly he read

the secret of being tall and then fled back to his land of the bogs. Back home he was an instant hero and, by using a special application of a condom he was able to sire his son who grew and grew to become Stumpy the Tall, King of the Bog.

"Meanwhile the Grond was very upset at loosing his Book of All Things and so hired a man by the name of Neil to systematically dishonour the name of the King of the Bog and to deride him for not being able to climb the wall - such an easy wall after all. This then Oh Stumpy is the one you seek and you will find him at the place of the Tree by Muddy Rock Cafe. Will that do? Can I have my chip now?"

Up leapt Stumpy and, hurling the crumbs of his butty to the snivelling sparrow, rushed out of the room with a blood curdling yell and the courage of his saber showing clearly through his pink tights. "Hi Ho, Cemetery Gates away" he cried and galloped off to Muddy Rock where he tied his steed to a tree and walked into the cafe. There in the corner sat the tallest of all men with a ragged beard and the wicked tongue. "You there" challenged Stumpy, "you must climb with me now for it is your fate". Neil quickly rushed to find some ropes for he did not know it was Stumpy the Wall but thought it was a real climber come to take him up a route. Up to the crag they went and at the foot of a huge precipice Stumpy ordered Neil to climb. This was a good ploy as Neil thought they would be safe with him in the lead, but little did he know the King of the Bogs. Stumpy took the next pitch leaving Neil on the tiny ledge and then he struck. At the top he quickly untied the rope and with a shout of "O.K. Neil, I'm safe" he dropped the rope. Thus to this day Neil is lost for ever on that tiny ledge and the King of the Bogs had had his vengeance.





# ROUND THE ANNA PURNA CIRCUIT

Inspired by descriptions and slides of Nepal and with the incentive of having two friends, Ian and Claire, living in Pokhara Vicky and I set off for Nepal. On the 8 November we flew to Kathmandu with Gill, a friend from Nottingham. We soon left Kathmandu behind as we rattled for 8 hours in a "luxury coach" to Pokhara. What a welcome! It was great to see Ian and Claire again and to stay in comfort for a few days. We swam, rowed on the lake and lazed around captivated by the backcloth of mountains rising 20,000' above the town. Machhapuchhre (nick named the fish tail mountain) dominates Pokhara shaped like a giant Matterhorn.

We had left the decision on where to trek until now. However it only took two minutes to decide on the Annapurna circuit and another ten to agree on a variation start from the lake, Begnes Tal, just outside Pokhara. The five of us were off, accompanied by three porters. Annapurna II and IV glowed golden in the morning light with their reflections shining in the lake. We walked through paddy fields, forests, along river banks and climbed a long ridge. We saw few tourists. On the second night we saw the sun set on Manaslu and in the morning rise on Annapurna II. It was like a dream. On the third day we joined the main route at Khudi and for the next six days ascended gradually to Manang at 3,000m. The valley, the Marsyangdi, had changed from sub-tropical through deciduous forest, steep gorges, alpine forest and pastures to a mountain desert.

We were now in Tibetan country. White prayer flags fluttered from every building which made a dramatic picture against the landscape of towering peaks and glaciers. Looking at Annapurna II from Upper Pisang could easily crick your neck! From Manang we climbed gradually to Phedi, the base camp to the Thorung Pass (5400m). On day 11 we set off for the pass. We could have done with an extra day's acclimatisation as it soon became hard work. With the dramatic views of the Pass came splitting headaches. Quick summit photos, a shaken bottle of beer and we're off down towards Muktinath. The landscape was now desert.

We had joined the tourist trail. Apple momos and pizza and other delights were now available to tempt us as well as our standard fare of rice and lentil curry. Nevertheless, the next few days going gently downhill seemed the hardest of the trek. We visited a Buddhist festival at Tukucho, survived afternoon duststorms and crawled wearily into Tatopani. It was time for a days rest. We soaked in the hot springs and celebrated Ian's birthday with pizza and beer. The following day we were off again now climbing towards Poon Hill. After a night of simple accommodation we reached Poon Hill mid-morning the next day. We took advantage of the classic views of Annapurna to see the sunset and the dawn. From here it was only two days to home. The first was a long descent, the second started with our last climb and a wonderful view of Machhapuchhre. Soon we were back at Pokhara and the familiar views of the mountains. It had been a wonderful adventure

and sharing of friendship.

Paul & Vicky Hildreth