

THE GWYDYR

No. 4

THE MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE GWYDYR MOUNTAIN CLUB

Apologies for the slight delay in getting this month's newsletter out to you but I've been busy on the hill and with life generally. It would be a great help if members would help me by sending me an email now and again as to what they get done on the hill. A few lines will suffice and a picture is a bonus, I will put it all together at the end of each month and send it out to the membership. If I have missed anyone's activities out then I apologise and will do my best to rectify in the following newsletter !

The AGM :-

We held the AGM in the Stork this year and it was agreed to increase the subs by £2.00 so now your annual subscriptions cost £52.00 and I am sure Dave Gray will be happy to receive your cheque or we can accept payment via the internet so email Dave if you are not sure how to do this. We also agreed to increase the Chapel hire fees for outside groups, full details will be with you shortly when the minutes are sent out.

Well, that's the boring bit out of the way.....

The CLM / Lin's 60th Birthday meet.



A Shropshire Ford



A Shropshire Bridge



A Shropshire Stile

The following was provided by Dave Gray :-

1. We had two groups on separate days doing the north end of Wenlock Edge
2. On day 2 we started with 28 people which I think is a record to do a 12 mile walk from the accommodation around the south end of Wenlock Edge taking in Norton Camp an Iron Age fort and Callow Hill which commands a magnificent view from a restored Victorian folly. Not all made the full day but we all enjoyed it
3. On day 3 some folk walked into Ludlow about 5 miles each way – I did about 14 miles in the hills between Craven Arms and Ludlow including the Teme Gorge
4. On day 4 a few of us did the Long Mynd on the way home, basically the summit and the north end of the ridge. We had great views of the snow capped Welsh hills.
5. Maurice and June also went Mountain biking.

We had good weather and fine views throughout. Wildlife highlights for me were a barn owl and several red kites.

Chris Harris advises that they met a local character in the pub who castrated Bullocks for a living !

On the same weekend Keith Colwell went up Pen Y Llithrig Wrach from Cwm Eigiau.

On the 6th March Carol Boothroyd, Phil Earl and I went up a snowy Snowdon, Phil chose Crib Goch while we went up the Pyg Track to arrive at a very crowded and cloudy summit. We all descended the Miners Path and had a brief ‘walk’ on a frozen Llyn Glaslyn. As the day wore on the mists lifted and afforded us fine views – isn’t that always the case when you’ve summited ! On the 7th March Andy Odger and I went climbing in the Llanberis Pass in beautiful warm spring sunshine with a snow clad peaks forming a delightful backdrop. We climbed the ‘usual’ classics of Wrinkle, Crackstone Rib and Skylon on Carreg Wastad before ‘retiring’ to the Bus Stop Quarry for the easy VS Equinox. A great weekend !



Allan on Crackstone Rib



Snowdon from Llyn Llydaw



3rd pitch of Crackstone Rib

The following weekend Andy Odger and Phil Earl went climbing at Stanage and climbed eight routes in the cold. Dave Gray went bothying at Mosedale Cottage and Shap Fell while in Snowdonia Jim Metcalfe went for a walk up Snowdon.

St Patrick's Day Cains Brewery visit 17th March

The soon to be merry band of 13 GMC members and friends made their way to the Brewery Tap for 6.30 leaving behind the strangely dressed people and the loud foreign music in the city centre. Our Guide was waiting; he seemed of suitable stature for leading a group on St Patrick's day.

The tour was both interesting and amusing and we also learnt some Liverpool History and how the Australians are coping with illiteracy with the help of the brewing industry. We returned to the Tap 75 minutes later for our free drinks. "Beware of the Double Bock" our trusty guide said, "treat it with respect, even the Germans sip it from a wine glass". The beer was excellent, the buffet set a new substandard in substandards but we half expected this. The only downside to the event was that Roger lost (presumed stolen) his newspaper and was unable to finish the crossword.

Wirral Mountain Bike Ride 20th March

9 keen riders (5 GMC members) arrived at the start after a night of rain. Despite a forecast of persistent rain, the drizzle soon gave way to a fine but misty morning. The going was soft, the views non existent and there were no mountains (unless you count the hill up to the Dee view Inn). Everyone arrived back at the Fox and Hounds suitably sprayed from head to toe with mud and needing a drink.

St John's in the Vale Camping Barn meet.

On the 20th March eight members went to Dave Gray's annual camping barn meet and despite a rotten day weather wise on Saturday we all managed a walk from Borrowdale to Watlendath and descended via the Falls of Lodore in slightly improving weather. A day notable for the lack of a cafe stop despite passing a lovely looking one in Rosthwaite ! We atoned for our omission by stopping in Keswick and indulged in a nice coffee and cake in the Lakeland Peggler cafe – really nice and well worth finding !

Sunday dawned much brighter and while Dave Gray and Christine went up Causey Pike (or thereabouts) the rest of us went up Helvellyn via Sticks Pass and Raise before descending the steep steps of Helvellyn Gill back to the road. We were lucky to get back to the cars just before the heavens opened and again we failed to find a cafe open as there were electrical works being done in the valley so there was no electricity – a poor excuse really !



The crew on a bridge near Rosthwaite



Ray nearing the top of Raise



Kevin nearing the summit of Helvellyn



Trevor, a prospective member ??

Arenig Fawr Thursday Walk :-



Lunch on Arenig Fawr

Another well attended mid week walk of ten miles in good weather, the photo was taken by the memorial near the summit.

The Annual Dinner :-

The annual dinner was a very good this year though only 37 members attended the Tyn Y Coed for the festivities. Margaret managed to raise £57 for club funds with the raffle and the infamous (!) photograph of the helicopter rescue earlier this year won the photographic competition. Members went for walks around Llyn Elsi and the Northern & Eastern Carneddau received some attention from members feet over the weekend.

Phil Earl and Andy Odger had a good days climbing at Trevor Rocks above Llangollen.

Geoff Brierley went Mountain Biking on the Marin Trail, at some point (Dave Gray took these notes BTW !) Mike Mc & Joyce went to Gordale and Buckden Pike.

Keith Colwell in Scotland :-

Keith has kindly written the following for us:-

Thought I'd let you know about the Scotland trip. The snow's going pretty quick. Plenty on the Ben still seen from by Corpach.

There's plenty of thawing going on because while i was arsing round floundering over boulders in the corrie below Ben Alligen I thought I heard the low throaty grumbly drone of a plane crossing through cloud. I says to meself "blimey that's low", half expecting it to stagger out of the clouds and wrap itself around the Fasferain Pinnacles; and thinks no more about it.

Anyhow, later, having sweated my way out of the chalet-sized boulders, I'd decided I was not going to get there because of, a) not enough time; b) not enough energy left, c) getting windy on my own, before the already grim day grew darker yet. So I sat in the sodding rain and ate a sodden sandwich and admired the grey veil drawn fetchingly over Liathach and I heard the grumbly noise again change into something like pots and pans being chucked round a Titan's kitchen by my ex in a strop -- which turned out to be lumps of ice detaching itself from a nearby gully. I watched chunks flying and smashing and mixing it with chunks of sandstone,

So I took my time over my three-day old corned dog sarny before sauntering back down in the refreshing rain like a bedraggled badger.

I did fair better in Glen Sheil. Had a good - dry - day on A Chralraig. Up and down the same way from the glen path which starts east of the Cluanie. Got to the first hump on the ridge but, despite having crampons and axe, felt a bit intimidated because I was alone and the shit came in (I'll show you photos)

Got up Sgurr na fienne one blustery day on South Sheil ridge. Sun was out. Snow was probably walkable/ kickable but I had my crampons on to be on the safe side. Would you believe it stayed clear until I was on my way back down -- You could see it coming from the south east. It hailed and snowed and blew but i was on my way down. Course it turned to lashing rain lower down so I did my impersonation of a leprachaun escaping from a washing machine.

Ah. Happy days. . .

The 'unofficial' GMC Scottish Easter Meet :-

As the Chapel is closed for the bathroom refurbishment an alternative meet was needed for Easter and so a few of us made our way to the Beinglass campsite near the legendary Drovers Inn at Inverarnan. A great walk on Good Friday saw Carol ascend her first Munro (Beinn Chabhair) in near perfect winter conditions. The views were incredible with the Trossachs looking mightily impressive under their mantle of snow. We espied some deer in the distance and some rather noisy geese skidding on a frozen loch. Despite a near searing heat softening the snow and making for harder going we made good time and got back to the campsite to meet Mark Cashman and Cynthia who had travelled up from the Lake District. Ronnie Davis was on his way as well as he had managed to get a lift from someone he met on UK climbing with the screen name of 'ICEMONSTER' !!!

He proved a somewhat ‘strange’ chappie and thankfully he preferred drinking in the Drovers rather than the lovely little bar in the campsite. Apparently he nearly started a riot and ended up threatening someone with his ice axes !!!! Beware of who you meet on the internet methinks !

Saturday dawned rather damp and misty so Ronnie, Carol and I went for a walk along the West Highland Way from the campsite to Inversnaid Hotel and back. Upon arrival at the hotel were where somewhat dismayed to find no ice cream van and no cafe. Thoroughly disgusted at the insensitivity of the Scottish we walked back at a really good pace to arrive back at the campsite after a good 12 mile walk. Mark and Cynthia had followed us on the loch side path but thought it would be more fun to climb uphill and eventually they got more than they bargained for and finished the walk a good couple of hours after we’d returned ! Thankfully the weather improved as the day progressed and towards the end it became a beautiful evening.

Easter Sunday started badly as I felt rotten after a bad night sleep and so I lent Mark, Ronnie and Cynthia my map and pointed them in the direction of An Caisteal, another Crianlarich Munro. It was duly despatched by all accounts and Ronnie ably led the last steep section by uttering the immortal words ‘ I’m having that ! ’ . Feeling decidedly ‘fragile’ (nothing to do with alcohol BTW !) Carol drove over to Glencoe and we walked up Coire Gabhail in much better weather and we feasted like kings on Peanut Butter Sandwiches, Chocolate and foamy frog ‘penny’ sweets. Despite one or two ‘rogue and churlish’ clouds the aspect was really alpine with blue skies and crisp white peaks before us. There was less snow than when I was up there with Neil and it was warmer so we never fell in the river – unlike one member recently !!! We drove back towards the Kinghouse for a beer and bowl of chips but not before stopping off at Lagangarbh (the SMC hut in Glencoe) and I am happy to book this hut if anyone is interested as it’s right beneath Buachaille Etive Mor and ideally situated for climbing and walking so any members interested let me know and I will see what I can do.



The Summit of Beinn Chabhair



Coire Gabhail



Carol & Ronnie



The Trossachs



How not to sledge !!!!

Monday was a nightmare weather wise with heavy rain so we headed east to Aviemore and Cairngorm mountain where there was still lots of snow. We just looked around really as it was quite late in the day and bitterly cold though the light was fantastic on the snow covered slopes as the sun shone now to dispel any doubts of the extra miles driven to get there. Carol bought a sledge and Tuesday morning saw us at the large car park in a biting wind looking for a suitable slope in which to hurl our bodies at – we found one but it was so cold we only lasted fifteen minutes before retreating back to the car and the long journey home.

All in all a really good trip and one that we should do more often.

Forthcoming Meets :-

On the 16th & 17th April there is lot's happening though the meets list does show a Chapel weekend that clearly cannot go ahead given the on-going works. We've booked Rock Hall Cottage in the Roaches for this weekend and sadly there are no more places available though please feel free to visit and see this unique building while we are there. Mark Barley has a Saturday walk listed and it would be good if it could be arranged to somewhere more local to where we are staying. If this trip is a success I'd like to do an annual booking as it's a tough hut to book given its popularity, so fingers crossed all will go well.

On the 22nd March Mike McEneany has another of his popular Thursday walks arranged in the Berwyns so if you are free please call him for full details.

On the 24th April Dave Gray has a Saturday walk planned in the Hirnarts and you are to meet at 10.00am at Grid ref: 953300 (if that makes sense !). Please contact Dave for more information and as always car sharing is good for the environment as well as the wallet.

The last weekend of the month Ray Baines has organised a camping weekend over the Bank Holiday at Side Farm, Patterdale (GR:MY398163) Ray has provided the following info so please contact him if you wish to go.

Friday 30th April - Monday 3rd May.

Min stay over Bank Holiday is 3 nights.

*Need to arrive at the site early to make sure of pitch as they don't take bookings.

*Cost per night £6.00 per night per tent plus £2.00 per car.

The campsite takes tents and small/medium sized camper vans

Pets are welcome but they don't like large or single sex groups (this is a family site).

Directions to Side Farm

From M6- Junction 36, take the A591 to Windermere then the A592 over Kirkstone Pass to Patterdale. Turn right just past the school and follow signs to Side Farm. Book in at the farmhouse and follow track to campsite.

Please let me know if you are interested in coming either by email or at the Tuesday night club meetings.

And as for the future.....

I want to go to Skye again and to whet your appetites I have copied the following pages from Bill Murrays classic 'Mountaineering in Scotland' about a day's climbing and walking on Skye in the 1930's. Please feel free to offer me a lift if you want to go at say Whit !!!!!!!!

Twenty-four Hours on the Cuillin.

It was ten o'clock at night, in Glen Brittle. The June sun had left out little cluster of tents, which nestled behind a screen of golden broom between the Atlantic and the Cuillin. Eastward, the peaks were written along the sky in a high, stiff hand. High above us, the brown precipice of Sron na Ciche, which reacts, chameleon-like, to every subtle change of atmosphere, was dyed a bright blood-red in the setting sun.

I watched the lights fade from the rocks and white evening mist begin to creep around the hills, then I thought of having supper and retiring with a pipe to my sleeping bag. But in this hope I had reckoned without my friend, B. H. Humble; his head adorned by a dilapidated panama, emerged of a sudden from the door of a nearby tent. The lighted eye, the mouth upturned at the corners, the warm colour – they all bore witness to a recent brain-storm. Humble had given birth to an idea. I regarded him with a profound suspicion.

'It would be a fine night for a climb,' said Humble, tentatively.

'Well,' I hastily replied. 'there's going to be no moon, no stars-it will be dark, cold, cloudy, and every cliff in mist. Granted that, it's heresy to deny that all weather's climbing weather.'

But Humble was paying no attention to me.

'We'd start right now,' said he; 'go up Coire Banachdich, rest on the main ridge, then north along the tops.'

'And what then ?'

'Leave it to me....' And he looked away very mysteriously.

'On this very spot,' I protested, 'is to be had a hot meal, a quiet pipe, and an eiderdown sleeping bag.' But I was merely according the flesh its privilege of free speech. The spirit was already aloft, I was pulling on my boots.....

I had faith in Humble. He is one of those men who brim with an incalculable alliance of ingenuity and energy. A rock climb in his company has all the fascination of a mystery tour; one is likely to end, not on some nearby peak, but miles from anywhere in a rarely visited mountain stronghold. And if port not be made until all hours of the day or night, at least one returns buoyed by novelties and ballasted by exhaustion. Of one thing I felt certain: there was more in his taciturnity than met the eye. I knew him. What that 'more' might be I should have to wait for time to disclose. I packed a rucksack, picked up a rope, and we bade farewell to Maitland and Higgins, the two remaining members of our party.

A June gloaming in Skye is so long-drawn-out that one may usually climb on moderate rocks until eleven o'clock. But the mist had been brewing for a hour in the corries and now overflowed round every peak, complicating the problem of route selection through the wilderness of scree and boulders that carpet Coire Banachdich. Up the wall that backs the corrie a winding route gives easy access to the main ridge. To find that route in mist at late twilight was another matter. Indeed it proved to be impossible.

We climbed the face by guess and by God a considerable height toward the crest, until an unavoidable traverse brought us to a square rock platform, like a balcony. The situation had a dramatic aspect that appealed to us. Below, the rocks plunged into blackness; above, they rose sheer into the mysteries of the mist. We resolved to bivouac until there was sufficient light for safe climbing.

There was just enough room on the ledge to accommodate us in comfort. Like difficulty, comfort in mountains is a term relative to the individual climber. We could stretch out at full length, heads pillow'd on rope or rucksack. The hard rock made an indifferent mattress and night cloud a somewhat chill blanket, but luckily I have the capacity to sleep at will, anytime and anywhere, and

Weariness can snore upon the flint, when resty sloth finds the down pillow hard.

Humble wakened me at two am. The darkness was appreciably less but mist still enveloped us. We could now see to move, and in two minutes arrived on the rim of the main ridge, at over three thousand feet. We turned northward and scrambled over the three main tops of Sgurr na Banachdich. Immediately beyond Banachdich the ridge takes a big swing north east, the first curve of the horse-shoe that encloses Loch Coruisk. The route at this juncture was by no means easy to find; four ridges branch downward-bound, and it is only too easy to follow the wrong line. The compass, moreover, is untrustworthy, for magnetic rocks on Banachdich attract the needle.

After reconnaissance we saw close by the spike of Sgurr Thormaid, projecting like a dragon's fang through streamers of twisting cloud. We swarmed up one side and down the other, secure in the knowledge that our route was now correct. A traverse of the Cuillin ridge in mist is a stirring experience. The jagged edge, picturesque enough when clear, then astounds the eye with a succession of distorted towers. They impend suddenly through the clouds, grim, as wild in outline as any creation of nightmare.

At three am we reached Sgurr a'Greadaidh. The dawn was well under way and sunrise might shortly be expected. Nothing was visible save mist, so we halted to cheer ourselves with a bite of food. I confess that I again fell asleep, curled up on a slab that gently tilted over the southern cliff. In a short while Humble roused me. He was justifiably in a state of high excitement. On every hand the mist was sinking, and slowly, one by one, each peak of the Cuillin reared a black tip through snow-white vapour.

Never again in summer have I seen a sight so magnificent. The clouds had now fallen to a uniform level at two thousand five hundred feet; just sufficient to hide the linking ridges and to isolate each pinnacle of the six mile horse shoe. From the mainland to far beyond the Outer Hebrides this cloud-mass formed an unbroken sea. Immediately beneath our feet the surface surged and spun as though impelled by inner vortices, rising and falling like the rollers of a mid-Atlantic swell. Over the submerged cols between each mountain the ocean poured and seethed in a never ending flow.

The grey sky was steadily changing to cornflower blue and black rock to ashen. To obtain a still finer vantage point we moved east to Sgurr a'Mhadaidh. No sooner did we reach the top than the sun rose. Down in the basin of Loch Coruisk, the cloud surface at once flashed into flame, as though a stupendous crucible were filled with burning silver. The twenty turrets of the Cuillin, like islands lapped by fire foam, flushed faintly pink. The shade crimsoned. Within a space of minutes, the rocks had run the gamut of autumn leafage, 'yellow, and black, and pale, and hectic red.'

Beyond such bare words one may say little. The mind fails one how miserably and painfully before great beauty. It cannot understand. Yet it would contain more. Mercifully, it is by this very process of not understanding that one is allowed to understand much: for each one has within him 'the divine reason that sits at the helm of the soul,' of which the head knows nothing. Find beauty; be still; and that faculty grows more surely than grain sown in season. However, I must be content to observe that here, for the first time, broke upon me the unmistakeable intimation of a last reality underlying mountain beauty; and here, for the first time, it awakened within me a faculty of comprehension that had never before been exercised.

Humble indeed had not failed me. He had hoped for a noble panorama. But in the bleak hours around midnight not even he had dreamed that we should be led by cloud and fire to the land of promise. Since then I have always believed and repeatedly proved that

mountains reserve their fairest prize for the man who turns aside from common-sense routine. One might say that hills repay trust with generosity. In Glen brittle, our companions when they awoke saw nothing but a steel-grey layer of low clouds, and not imagining that the peaks were in sunlight, commiserated us on such an unprofitable end to our waywardness.

Several of the best hours of our otherwise misspent lives this passed away on Sgurr a'Mhaidaigh. Towards nine o'clock the cloud bank broke up and gradually dissolved. We scrambled down to the high col under Bidein Druim nan Ramh, and thence turned downward toward to Coruisk by the Corrie of Solitude. Overhead, hardly a wisp of cloud remained; below, Loch Coruisk was a royal blue rippled with silver.

After winning clear of the screes in the corrie we walked the best part of two miles south, to the junction of the main burn and the loch. And here I add my voice to Humble's in exploding the myth of 'gloomy Coruisk.' The face of Scotland has so often been falsified by writers in search of the melodrama that there is now difficulty in convincing people of the evidence of their own eyes. Far from being shadowed and overhung by beetling crags, Loch Coruisk has a fairly open situation, inasmuch as the Cuillin main ridge lies a couple of miles back. In spring and summer it is flooded by sunlight for the best part of the day. I have heard it further alleged that here grows no tuft of vegetation; yet when I stood beside the loch with Humble the very banks were alive with wild flowers, their hues offset by cool green shrubs and long grasses. We might have imagined ourselves transported to the land of Xanadu, where

.....twice five miles of fertile ground with walls and towers were girdled round, And there were gardens, bright with sinuous rills.

A few of these flowers were rare, and Humble, who is an accomplished botanist, was highly gratified by some carnivorous specimens.

As I am ill content to rejoice in mountains yet not climb them, so I am compelled not only to admire lochs and rivers but to plunge in and swim. In either act knowledge of their charm is extended. Every condition for the ideal swim had here been satisfied, for the sun had more than warned us on the four mile tramp. There was no need to propose a bathe – of one accord we stripped and plunged. I have never known anything like it. The swim was unique in my own experience because all five sense were feasted to the full.

The sharp sting of that first dive cleared at one stroke the fogs of lethargy from the mind-at-one stroke the world stood vivid. The corrie was full of sun and the song of the burn, gay with the flash of many colours and the dance of light on the loch, fresh with the scents of blossom and an aromatic tang of plants in the morning air. I drank from the burn and the taste was sweet and lively to the palate. And these good reports, being gathered together in the mind, suddenly fused in image of the beauty we had seen during the supreme hour on

Sgurr a Mhadaidh: so that I knew, what until then I had not known, that the one Beauty pervades all things according to their nature, they have beauty by virtue of participation in it; and that in the degree of realizing its presence within us, so is life lived in fullness. The ecstasy of that morning is still bright after eight years.*

When at last we emerged dripping from the water we let our bodies dry in the hot sun while we ate our too little food. Our departure from camp had been just a thought casual. There is no appetite on earth to surpass a Skye appetite; one is permanently hungry. But now we were ravenous. However, shortage of food for a day is of no consequence; much more serious was Humble's plight. I was almost sorry for him. He is an ardent and expert photographer and he had brought a camera but no spools.

Our intention was to go down to the sea – one might almost say up to the sea, for parts of Coruick are said to be below sea level and then go north up the far side of the loch to Sgurr Dubh, by the ascent of which we should return to the Glen Brittle side of the main ridge. Reviewing this project in my mind while we walked along the east bank of the loch, I began to regard the absence of spools as an unmixed blessing. On a fine day in the Cuillin there is no more insatiable devourer of the fleeting hours than a camera with Humble behind it. As it was, the surprising variety of plant life all along the two mile bank of the loch caused many a halt and much botanical dawdling. I think we spent two hours over these two miles, for it was after noon when we arrived at Loch Scavaig.

All this while I had been promising myself another bathe. As befits a small sea-loch, Scavaig is green, deep and clear – a perfect swimming pool in one of the most lonely and remote corners of Britain. What was our astonishment, then, when we arrived on the brink, to see a MacBrayne Line steamer sweep into the loch and drop anchor ! Within fifteen minutes several boatloads of tourists landed. They had arrived from Oban to see that world famous view: Coruisk and the Black Cuillin.

At another time Humble and I might have selfishly resented this landing as a rude shattering of our solitude. Instead, we looked at each other with gleaming eyes. The same thought had simultaneously occurred to us both – food!

We negotiated swiftly with the officer in charge. In a few minutes we were taken out to the ship in a motor boat and were climbing on board. The first man I met on deck knew me, and to put the finishing touch to our luck he was officially in charge of the cruise. We explained our urgent need of a good meal. He introduced us to the captain and we found ourselves conducted as honoured guests to the first class dining saloon. I must explain that my beard was a fortnight strong, that I was in shirt sleeves and braces, bore a large coil of rope round my shoulders, and that my breeches were in tatters. Humble, I am glad to report, looked distinctly less disreputable, but any good effect was destroyed by his antique and sorely battered hat.

Having run the gauntlet of clean, cool, spruce, and inquisitive tourists on deck, we were mightily relieved to find the dining saloon empty. The stewards had never before entertained two starving climbers. They watched round eyed while we polished off two helpings of every course throughout a lengthy menu.

Then followed a quart of cool beer. Ever since that day I have harboured tender feelings for the English tourist, and I raise my hat to the name of MacBrayne.

At three o'clock we went ashore and were introduced to a number of young ladies, who suspected that Humble and I were local colour engaged by Messrs. MacBrayne for their entertainment. The consensus of opinion regarding the view spread before us was this : that to set foot in the Cuillin either in mist or clear weather was certain death : and that Loch Coruisk was the deepest lake in Europe – otherwise, why had they been brought to see it ?

The ladies were charming, and after a prolonged bout of photography we parted from them with regret. The time was now five o'clock and we should be hard pressed to reach Glen Brittle before dark. Our proposed route of ascent, by the easy ridge of Sgurr Dubh, was over three thousand feet high, and one of the two longest rock climbs in Britain. I would recommend that ridge as a paradise for a rock climbing beginner. Apart from the initial trouble in climbing up onto the ridge, one may thereafter proceed un-rope up broad acres of boiler plate slabs, whose rock is the roughest gabbro in all the Cuillin. In other words, it is so rough and reliable that only the grossest negligence could bring a man to harm. Here, too, one may learn balance and rhythm – the secrets of successful rock work.

Humble and I kept our pace as slow as we could, consistent with continuous upward movement. The steamer slowly shrank to the size of a skiff and human figures became too small to be distinguished. White gulls wheeled and flashed across the green sparkle of Loch Scavaig. Meanwhile we sweltered under a grilling sun and were roasted by waves of heat reflected upward from the brown rock. The temperature must have been at least ninety degrees, and a raging thirst possessed our desiccated bodies. Beyond the summit, we threaded an involved descending route amongst huge crags, where we were obliged to rope down an overhang of twenty feet-our first use of the rope all day. At nine o'clock we stood on the rim of Coire a'Ghrunnda.

We were anxious to reach camp as soon as possible; our friends knew us too well to bother about a twenty-four hours' absence, but might feel less at ease thereafter. We decided, therefore, not to traverse Sgurr Alasdair and instead went straight down to Coire a'Ghrunnda. Here, if you like, lies a genuinely gloomy loch-a black and glassy sheet of water framed by a chaos of scree as desolate as one may find in all Scotland. In the stream that flows from it we at last quenched our agonizing thirst. Then we set off downhill, skirting those terrific slabs in the corrie bed, convex slabs that pour seaward, scored and burnished by ancient glaciers.

At ten-thirty pm we strolled into camp, exactly twenty-four hours after departure. Maitland and Higgins had proved friends indeed and a hot meal was waiting for us. This time, no earthly power, not even another Humble mystery tour, could have wooed me from supper, a quiet pipe, and that eiderdown sleeping-bag.

*It must be remembered that this book was written during the author's internment in a Prisoner of War camp after fighting Rommel in the desert. He found writing about mountains and his climbing cathartic and it helped him overcome the difficulty of an uncertain future.