

Climber and Rambler continues to cater for the general hill-users' market and business-wise has grown from strength to strength.

The saddest thing to happen recently is the mammoth growth of bureaucracy in the climbing world in line with the same trend in other walks of life. The BMC has grown alarmingly and is dependent on the Sports Council, a Government body, for much of its present income. The general mood among climbers is against organization and the presence of such a strong national body holds frightening prospects if the power should shift into the 'do-gooders' hands.

The blame for the BMC gaining strength must lie with the major clubs, the Alpine Club, the Climbers' Club, the Fell and Rock Climbing Club and the Scottish Mountaineering Club. Their complacency has allowed the bureaucrats to get a grip on climbing. Although complacency by the clubs is exactly the way climbers like the show to be run, maybe it is time for them to show their teeth.

The most painful development has been the continued growth of educationists using our very limited resources for their own purposes with the support of the very people who earn their living from outdoor pursuits. The hills cannot be enlarged to cater for more people. Climbing and walking should not be encouraged in this way; there are simply not the facilities. A large increase in numbers of climbers will spoil the very beauty of the hills, will inevitably mean more accidents and result in some bright Member of Parliament, who has no understanding of climbing, introducing rules and regulations. The freedom of the hills is very definitely under threat by the promotion of climbing in this way. Otherwise British climbing looks very healthy.

Regional Notes 1977

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THE ALPS AND EUROPE

As usual *Mountain* and other periodicals gave considerable detail on recent climbs in the Alps, and we make here a fairly random selection of what seem to be some of the more outstanding items. The scale of activity is of course enormous—in particular, winter ascents and solo climbs are in vogue and new routes where they appear are usually on faces and ridges which already boast a multitude of alternative lines. This is an inevitable consequence of the popularity of the sport and the finite potential for new climbs which the Alps represent.

The N face of the Grandes Jorasses has been a typically popular hunting ground for new routes. Pierre Beghin and Xavier Fargeas made the first winter ascent (second overall) of the Bonatti/Vaucher route on Pointe Croz in December 1976. Earlier in the year, other new lines were established by British climbers. In July, Alex MacIntyre, Tim Rhodes and Willie Todd climbed the face to the left of the Shroud (600m, TD). Later on, MacIntyre and Nick Colton climbed another new route between the Walker Spur and the Central Couloir (1200m, ED). Terry King and Gordon Smith made a direct ascent of the Croz Spur, avoiding the deviations of the Peters/Maier route and believed it to be a new line—however, it later appeared that this ascent had been made by Helmut Kiene in 1975 and not recorded. Alex MacIntyre has written a review article about climbs on this face ('Cold enough for comfort') in *Mountain* 53 21, to which some additions are later provided by Lucien Devies (*Mountain* 57 15). The E face of the Grandes Jorasses received its first winter ascent in 4 days in March 1977 by Claude Marmier and Christian Rudolf.

Other well-known peaks have claimed equal attention. Thus, also in the Mont Blanc group, climbers are still managing to squeeze in more routes on the Grand Pilier d'Angle (see *AJ 81 234*). The then existing network of routes is illustrated in a photograph in *Mountain 53 17*—in all 9 lines are shown and others have been recorded since. A more unusual achievement was made between 28 February and 13 March 1977 when a 9-man Czech team completed the first winter traverse of the Mont Blanc chain. They followed the frontier ridge from the Col de Voza in the W to the Col des Hironnelles in the E. Four climbers completed the traverse, while the others provided support by placing caches of food along the route.

On the Matterhorn N face, tragedy overtook 2 British climbers in late December 1976. James Bolton and Dave Robinson were separated on the descent after climbing the Schmid route, and Robinson was later found to have fallen to the foot of the E face. Several other ascents of this face were made in the 1977 winter season; solo climbs by Tsuneoh Hasagawa and Wolfgang Merhar (in a very rapid 6½ hours) and by a 3-man Japanese team (Matsubayasi, Yamada and Fujiwara). A further very fast ascent was made by Martin Wechselberger and Wilfried Studer in 12 hours in bad weather.

In December 1976, Dick Renshaw and Dave Wilkinson climbed a new route on the NW face of the Mönch in the Oberland. They took a central line on the face which had defeated several earlier attempts. *Mountain 54 14* gives further details and a photograph of the various routes on the face.

While extreme ski-ing is certainly only a small minority interest, the number of spectacular descents being made is increasing year by year. In an article in *La Montagne et Alpinisme (107 9)*, one of the most expert practitioners, Anselme Baud, describes some of his recent descents, eg the Couturier Couloir of the Aiguille Verte. In the spring of 1977 a number of steep faces were descended. Examples are the N face of the Col d'Aiguille Verte (first descent by Francois Villiot and Dominique Potard), the Gervasutti Couloir (regularly), the NE face of the Col de Peutery (first descent by Marc Boivin and Patrick Gabarron) and the N face of the Aiguille Blanche (first descent by Anselme Baud and Patrick Vallencant). A well-known extreme skier, Heini Holzer, was killed in a fall on the descent of the NE face of the Piz Roseg on 4 July 1977. Holzer had apparently been somewhat disillusioned with the way climbing had developed, eg the use of excessive aid and over-exposure to the media; he had thus taken up extreme ski-ing in a search for a purer expression of alpinism. On a lower level of risk, *Les Alpes* (Review, Autumn 1977, p 112) contains an article by Albert Schmidt on ski touring in the Dolomites.

An area which is off the climber's normally well-beaten track is discussed by John Sheard in *Crags 6 16*, ie the Grand Canon du Verdon in Provence, the largest of France's limestone gorges (depth 300 to 450m; see accompanying photograph). The area has only recently been developed and offers considerable scope for new routes. The Verdon gorge is also mentioned in an article by David Belden (*Climbing 40 16*) on climbing in Provence, which also covers the Calanques and Buoux.

Away from the Alps, *Crags 5 22* contains an article by Al Evans on the Ulvik area in SW Norway, which is on one of the arms of the Hardinger Fjord. Geoff Birtles and Evans are extremely enthusiastic about it, concluding that it is better than the Romsdal, particularly because it has a much lower rainfall. They mention a number of undeveloped faces of which the Osa Face (600m), the S face of Krassfj (300m), the N face of Kvannskoran (600m) and the Osastolan face of Vassfjoro (600m) are the pick. Much of the rock is accessible from the roadside and Birtles and Evans are offering cheap summer tours to the area. *Mountain 54 14* contains details of some recent climbs in the Romsdal and the Jotunheim.

The following guide-books have been received:

Meteora Felsen—Nordgriechland Dietrich Hasse and Heinz Lothar Stutte (Geo-Buch Verlag, Munich, 1977, pp 128, maps and illustrations, DM 19.80, in German). A climbers' guide-book to the fantastic rocks which outcrop at Meteora on the Plain of Thessaly in Greece. Some of the larger rock masses carry monastic buildings going back in some cases to the 14th Century. So steep are these plinths that visitors had sometimes to be hauled up in a net or a basket. One wonders how the first man reached the top; it must be that his climbing ability matched that of the expert writers of this guide-book. It is a long way from Britain but the journey looks to be very worthwhile.

Escalades en Vallée de l'Anglin—Rochers de la Guignoterie C. Lachenko, M. Piechaczyk and A. Rambour (CAF Sections Touraine & Orleans, 1977, illustrations, topos, pp 48, in French, npq) Guide-book to the area of W central France introduced in *AJ 81 17*.



94 *The Verdon Gorge (Photo: T. M. Connor)*

Guides des Montagnes Corses Vol 1 Le Massif du Cinto; vol 2 Centrale et Méridionale. Michel Fabrikant (Club Alpin Français, vol I—1975, pp 271, vol II—1976, pp 319, photographs, maps, diagrams, npq, in French) These 2 guides cover between them everything that a visiting mountaineer will wish to know about the mountains of Corsica. Vol 1 is the third edition of the Cinto guide, being virtually a reprint of the 1964 edition with an addendum bringing information up-to-date on refuges in the area and major climbs that have been done since 1965. Vol 2 is the first edition to the other areas and covers, as the author says, all that can reasonably be covered in a volume that size for such a large area. The comprehensive map in the back of each volume shows the complexity and interest of the areas under consideration, and it is surprising that, although frequently written about in pre-war journals of various clubs, little has been heard of British exploits there in recent years.

Craggs of the Swiss Berne Alps Suke Okazawa (SAC Sektion Bern, 1976, pp 250, photos, diagrams and maps, npq, in Japanese) This guide to the 'Bernese Alps' is a summarized translation from the German using many of the diagrams from SAC guide-books. It is the first guide-book based on the 'English model' to be published in Japan.

AFRICA

La Montagne et Alpinisme 107 18 contains an account of a traverse of the Atlas Mountains by Michael Peyron, made in the Spring of 1976. The route described starts in the region of Midelt in the E, and finishes in the forests N of Taroudannt in the W; it passes through the M'Goun and Toubkal massifs of the High Atlas. The route is between 500 and 600km long. Some practical details concerning maps, equipment, climate and places to stay are given and there is a bibliography. Hamish Brown gives a useful fact summary on the High Atlas in *Climber and Rambler* April 1977, p 38. *Les Alpes* (Review, Autumn 1977, p 122) contains a short article on the Hoggar by H. Faessler, with some good colour photographs, the outcome of a trip made in November 1975. Paul Luckock also writes about an expedition to the Hoggar on p 43.

Mr P. H. Hicks writes concerning our report published in *AJ* 81 236 where we stated that Cheeseman and Snyder had made the second 'grand traverse' of Mount Kenya. He points out that he and Firmin made the first ascent of the N face and traversed over Batian and Nelion to descend the SE face in 1944; he thinks that this was probably the second traverse of the mountain. Later, Firmin and Howard made several traverses by the various new routes that they climbed and he feels that there must have been a number of other similar traverses over the years. He wonders what the precise definition of 'grand traverse' is, and conjectures that possibly the Shipton/Tilman route of 1930 is meant. Rene Bere, Ashley Greenwood and Hicks attempted this route in 1946, but were forced to abandon it; however, he feels certain that even this route, if it is the 'grand traverse', must have been repeated, probably by Firmin and Howard. We would welcome any further views on this point.

Heavy rains have hindered recent climbing on Mount Kenya. Ian Howell and Iain Allan found a hard route on the unclimbed SW face of Point John (4883m). This sheer 370m wall overlooks the Teleki Valley and local climbers have had their eyes on it for some while. Much of the initial overhanging section was sustained A3—unfortunately, heavy rain denied them a chance of a summit push when this was a definite possibility.

This pair have also been active along with others in the Hell's Gate Gorge, where they have achieved a number of new routes; thus on the Main Wall they climbed Merlin (HVS, A2), First Aid (HVS, A1) and Poseidon (150m, VS/HVS with one A1 aid pitch).

On p 120, Michael Scott gives a review of the history of climbing on Table Mountain in South Africa.

ASIA

HINDU KUSH

Noshaq (7492m) Some fine alpine style ascents were made on Noshaq and on some neighbouring mountains by a Polish expedition in the summer of 1976. Christoph Zeruk made an 11-hour solo climb of Noshaq in a single push from Base Camp, bivouacking on the descent.

A 14-member Yugoslav expedition put all members on the summit in August 1977.