

Kongur which we could see were harder, longer and steeper than those from the S.

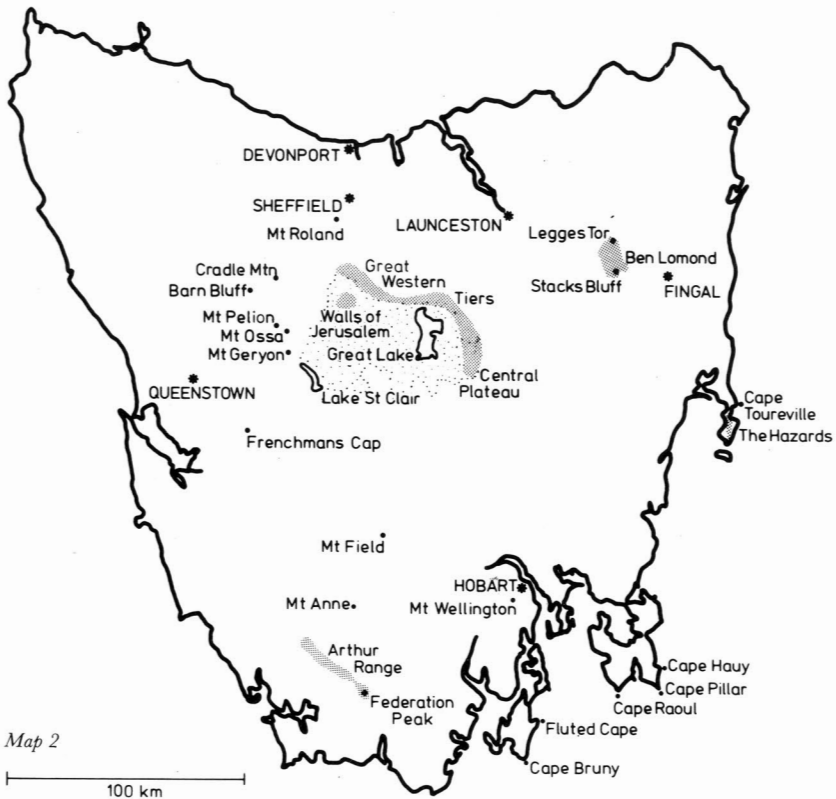
The weather which had been changeable over the past few days now grew worse and for the last 6 days gave us very little in the way of views. Chris and I carried a camp up to the E valley head hoping to climb a peak in the Shiwakte group thus joining up with Skrine's exploration and in addition getting a different view of Kongur. The clouds remained low and snow fell. Our last effort involved trying to climb a shapely peak above Gez which we called the Gez Matterhorn. That night torrential rain and fresh snow fell at our camp site at 3950m so we had to give up this attempt.

We returned to Kashgar on 20 July and as we descended the gorge of the Gez river we had excellent views of Kongur which had cleared after the bad weather of the last few days. This seemed to confirm that the summit was at the W end of the summit plateau. In 40 days of exploration, despite Alan Rouse's accident we had explored a vast amount of country, climbed 2 respectable peaks and seen Kongur from 6 different and informative viewpoints. The organization of the Chinese Mountaineering Association was excellent. We will return in the summer of 1981 to climb Kongur by its S side using Alpine-style methods. The expedition will be a combined scientific and mountaineering project and the use of Alpine-style tactics ensures that neither interferes with the other. The scientific content is aimed at expanding our knowledge about the oedema of exercise and of altitude which contributes to the lethal complications of mountain sickness. We now know that the mechanism of the formation of this oedema is found also in heart and lung diseases, so that this work will benefit both the ill patient and the fit mountaineer. In addition we shall be investigating the reasons why modern mountaineers have gained the extraordinary facility for climbing peaks of 8000m and above with much the same ease as high altitude dwellers such as Sherpas.

Mountains and climbs in Tasmania

Roland Rodda

Tasmania, the island State of the Australian Federation is some 240km S of the continental mainland and in the low forties of S latitude. About the area of Scotland, it is triangular in outline with one apex to the S and coastal sides of about 300km. There is a relatively undissected dolerite capped large central plateau rising from 600m in the S to over 1100m in the N. The N and E rim of this central plateau falls steeply in a long curved escarpment of dolerite bluffs called rather confusingly the Great Western Tiers. To the E across the broad rift valley of the Tamar are the NE highlands comprising uplifted remnants of old fold mountains with towered dolerite tops and dominated by the dolerite capped plateau horst of Ben Lomond. To the W of the central plateau the W ranges form a jumbled series of peaks made up of dolerite crowns on steeply tilted sediments but to the S the western ranges fan out with wider valley systems. A few outlying NW and W peaks are conglomerate, the SW ranges are quartzite, some lower mountains on the E coast are granite and there are various



Map 2

scattered small sandstone outcrops which provide a relief to the predominant dolerite.

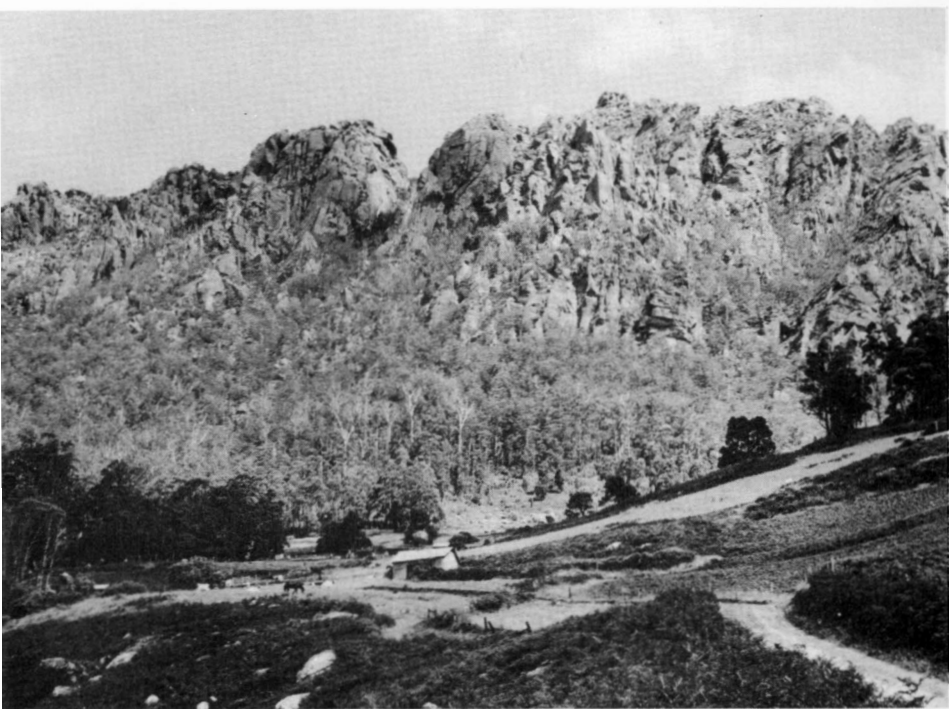
Although Tasmania has been described as thoroughly mountainous, there are only 7 separate peaks over 1500m and the highest of these fifteen-hundreders, Mt Ossa is but 1617m. There are therefore no glaciers and there is no permanent snowline, but the almost innumerable peaks and ridges with rocky summits and crests of over 1000m provide a variety of delightful mountain walks and many exciting climbs. The mountain slopes are heavily forested with open eucalypt on the drier E side in the lee of the prevailing westerlies but to the W there is a mixed rain forest containing the notorious Tasmanian horizontal scrub (*Anadopetalum biglandulosum*) and cutting grass (*Gahnia spp.*). The higher ridges are generally scrubby and usually quite dense on the shady S faces but often open and grassy on their sunny N slopes. The higher moorlands in spring and early summer may be a blaze of colour from the flowers of a variety of endemic Tasmanian plants and even the painfully prickly grass (*Richea scoparia*) has brilliant flowers of red, orange or pale yellow. But frequent bush fires have destroyed a lot of forest and mountain scrub. With very slow regeneration above 1000m progress on foot is facilitated in these old burnt areas although the devastation is quite appalling to the aesthetic eye.

The NE highlands are dominated by the Ben Lomond plateau all of which is in the Ben Lomond National Park of 16457 hectares. Most of the 14 x 6km plateau is above 1300m with Legges Tor in the N at 1572m and Stacks Bluff in the S at 1527m being the 2nd and 6th of the 7 fifteen-hundreders.

Early expeditions to the area are unrecorded but the plateau was surveyed by Legge in 1905-6. There is now a road up the scree at Jacobs Ladder to Big Ben Creek on the plateau and the foot of the ski slopes on the SE of Legges Tor. Of the numerous dolerite cliffs around the rim of the plateau, those most climbed have been the Ben Lomond Cliffs accessible from the ski road on the N and Stacks Bluff accessible from the mining town of Storeys Creek on the S. The climbs on the 4km string of Ben Lomond Cliffs with more than a hundred routes described, compare favourably with those of other popular cliff areas on the Australian mainland. The Pavilion and to some extent Heathcliffe are reminiscent of the Warrambungles in rock structure and steepness but Frews Flutes is unique and is the most regular columnar cliff in the State, 100 to almost 200m high and $\frac{1}{2}$ km wide. All routes are consistently hard and many steep exhausting jam cracks such as those on Robins Buttress require a very high degree of fitness.

The S ramparts of the Ben Lomond massif flanking Stacks Bluff, altogether comprise a group of 5 cliffs which are strung along a front of about 5km and which yield routes of 100m or more. The high dolerite rock is free of vegetation and provides a wide variety of climbing features. Hagen Ridge on the SW cliffs is a long straight-forward 9 pitch 280m climb in grand surroundings. There are many more routes still to be worked out in this quite extensive rock-climbing area.

To the E of Stacks Bluff on the opposite side of the S Esk Valley and 4km from the town of Fingal is Fingal Cliff which is one massive 200m face of steep relatively unbroken dolerite with an unusual and quite remarkable scarcity of crack systems. Routes have been put up most of the few natural lines but no climbs have yet been done on the bare starkly open faces of this cliff.



6 *Mount Roland (Photo: R. Rodda)*

Mt Roland (1231m) is a northern outlier of the Great Western Tiers and its cliffs are a striking feature from almost anywhere on the fertile NW coast of Tasmania. There is an easy but roundabout marked track via a rugged valley on the SW of the mountain but much steeper more direct tracks lead up 2 of the N scrub filled gullies. My wife and I as a pipe opener regularly begin our summer holiday by toiling up one or other of these gullies. We relieve the uphill grind by stopping to enjoy the views looking down between the gully walls on to the lush farmland around Sheffield or to admire the orange-red Christmas-bell flowers of *Blandfordia punicea* growing in the gravel filled crannies of the rock walls. From the top, all the major peaks of the N parts of the W ranges can be picked out. The NW aspect of the mountain has provided a number of good climbing routes on slabs, cracks and walls. The rock is sound but small holds on the rounded pebbles in the conglomerate require respect. The Rysavy Ridge route of 350m is a real mountaineering outing. There are a number of steep but climbable open faces which have not yet been thoroughly investigated and which will provide many future climbs.

On the W rim of the central plateau is a 3km diameter amphitheatre—the Walls of Jerusalem. In the several lakes on the boggy floor at 1300m the platypus (*Ornithorhynchus anatinus*) is often seen. The Walls reach almost 1500m and some climbs have been done on the W Wall but the dolerite is very fragmented. The area is frequented by mountain walkers and several parties may be met camped in sheltered sites among aged native pencil pines (*Athrotaxis cupressoides*). The scenery is wild and especially harsh where old bush fires have converted the alpine scrub to hectares of grotesque black and white skeletons.

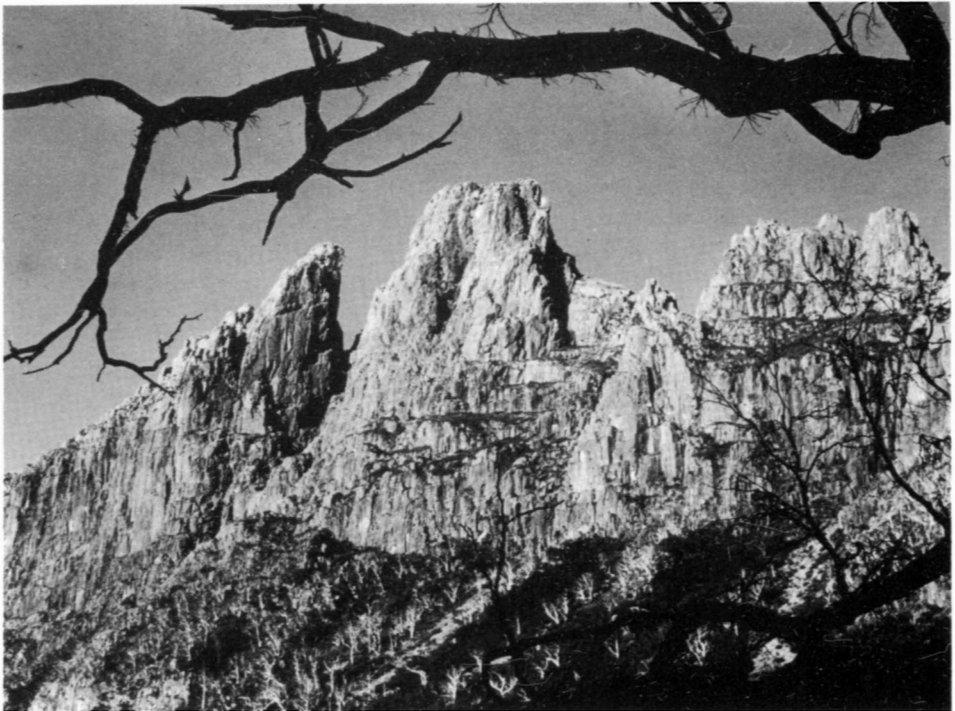


7 Cradle Mountain (Photo: P. Robinson)

The N third of the W ranges includes the Cradle Mountain-Lake St Clair National Park of 126205 hectares which is accessible by road at the N, E and S boundaries. The Park can be traversed on foot from N to S by the famous 80km Overland Track winding between its dolerite mountains and many lakes. Cradle Mountain (1545m) viewed from the N road end at Dove Lake is for the motorist, Australia's only alpine scene. The climb from there on a marked track is but a good 3 hours with easy scrambling on to and along the final ridge. From the top on a clear morning the view of most of N Tasmania is quite rewarding to any mountaineer's eyes. The peak was first climbed by the Van Diemen's Land pastoral company surveyor Hellyer in 1831 and the traverse of the long rocky ridge over Little Horn, Weindorfers Tower, Smithies Peak to Cradle summit was first done by two Austrians, the Malcher brothers in early 1914. There are a variety of climbing routes. The entire traverse has been done in winter and a few good ice gully climbs have been achieved although suitable conditions have not often been encountered by most winter parties.

Slightly higher than Cradle and 5km to the S is Barn Bluff (1559m) a stumpy symmetrical tower of dolerite with a marked route over and between large boulders up to some ledges on its N face. The dolerite columns around the remainder of the peak do not appear to have been seriously investigated for climbing but should provide quite a number of routes.

About the same height and 13km further S in the central part of the Park is Mt Pelion West (1554m) another but more elongated and narrower dolerite outcrop. There is a marked route from the Overland Track up the NE end and on to the summit ridge of jumbled gigantic boulders but the top may also be approached from



8 *The W side of Mount Geryon (Photo. R. G. Williams)*



9 *Frenchman's Cap (Photo: J. England)*

the NW end of the ridge. There are few records of what must be many other interesting routes.

To the E and on the N of the open Pelion Plains is Mt Oakleigh (1280m). The only ascent (made in 1977) of the W Pinnacle Ridge of 350m with its numerous tall gendarmes required 12 hours of rock climbing.

To the SW and only 6km away is Mt Ossa (1617m) which is an unspectacular mountain although the highest in Tasmania. There is a marked route from the Overland Track to the E at Pelion Gap but the top is also readily reached from Ewarts track to the NW. In winter much of the former route especially across the S face of Mt Doris may be a long snow plod. All these central area peaks are accessible from the Pelion Plains which can also be reached in under 5 hours by the Arm River Track from a forestry road near the E boundary of the National Park.

In the S part of this National Park is the 8km long Du Cane Range with 7 separate mountains over 1400m. The highest is Mt Geryon (1509m) the four tower-like peaks of which are all climbers' mountains. Many fine dolerite climbs of over 300m in summer and mixed snow and rock climbs in winter have been done on Geryon and others in this range such as the Guardians, the Acropolis, Walled Mountain and Mt Gould. The Du Cane range provides Tasmania's nearest to alpine climbing but ready access is dependent on the availability of a boat on Lake St Clair and this has limited very considerably the popularity of the area.

The mountain which stands out of the centre of the W ranges is the 1443m high Frenchmans Cap, a vertically sliced half dome of white quartzite with partly overhanging walls of 400m on the SE and E faces. It lies in the 10214 hectare National Park of that name, the boundary of which is some 5km by foot track from the Lyell

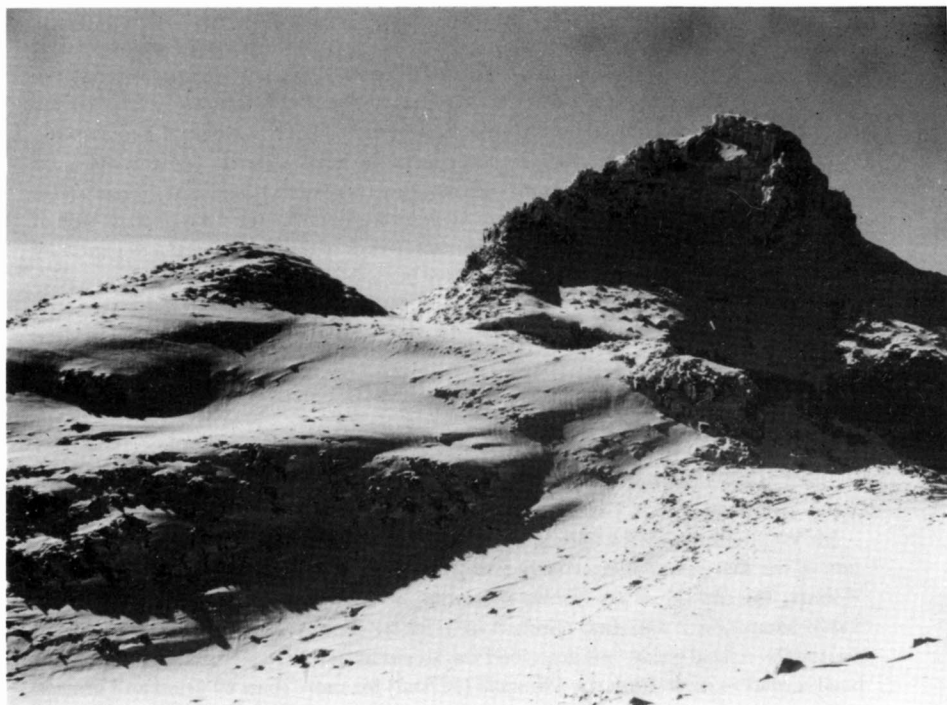
Highway to Queenstown on the W coast. The generally sodden wet track traversing swampy button-grass (*Gymnoschoenus sphaerocephalus*) covered plains, rain forest and scree to the Lake Tahune Hut takes about 10 hours. A cairned walking route to the summit of the Cap via the N Col is another hour and probably follows the route of the first known ascent by the surveyor James Sprent in 1832. The Cap itself is toward the W end of a series of peaks which together form the horse-shoe shaped rim of an old glaciated cirque, open to the SE and with a perimeter of over 12km. The cirque wall is broken toward the E by the 300m deep U shaped gap of Barron Pass on each side of which are a series of jagged peaks. The quartzite rock of the Cap is hard and generally sound and some 30 fine climbing routes have been described on steep open faces with small secure holds and very shallow cracks. Chimneys are scarce but there are some lines in deep couloirs. The A Toi La Gloire route of 300m on the formidable SE face first ascended in 1965 is probably the best known climb but the Thierry Le Fronde of 170m on the Tahune face is a superb route and the Chimes of Freedom of 250m on the SE face is also a popular climb.

The only route up the main part of the E face, Conquistador of 300m was first climbed in 1972 but has not yet been repeated and is one of Australia's great climbs. Some ascents via the N Col have been done in difficult winter conditions.

Mt Wellington is an 8 x 5 km hump of dolerite above a sedimentary base on the W side of the Derwent River estuary and provides a striking back-drop to the city of Hobart, the capital of Tasmania, sprawling on its lower slopes. Originally called Table Mountain it was first climbed in 1798 by Bass. Darwin climbed it in 1836 assisted by a local guide and described the ascent as 'a severe day's work'. There has been a road to its summit the Pinnacle (1270m) for more than 40 years and around and across its upper slopes there are numerous formed or marked tracks which provide pleasant walks through heavy eucalyptus forest and alpine scrub or moorland, although the vegetation remains severely devastated from the catastrophic bush fires of 1967. For the climber there are a number of dolerite cliffs of which the Organ Pipes are the best known and as seen from Hobart appear to form the wall of Mt Wellington with its rounded top above. The Pipes are made up of a continuous chain of buttresses spread out over 1½ km and each buttress consists of an abrupt forecliff of about 70m crowned by a broken crest and may provide climbs up to 110m. The forecliffs are essentially holdless columns and buttresses rent by numerous cracks and chimneys with scattered rectangular ledges, platforms and steps where blocks have broken away by weathering. As expected with dolerite, most climbs on the Pipes call for chimneying, jamming, bridging and laybacking. Although there are no records of early rock climbs, more than 125 routes have been described in the last 20 years. A few of the hardest may be beyond the capacity of most recreational climbers but the Organ Pipes remain a popular rock climbing area.

Some 70km W of Hobart and overlooking the middle of the Derwent Valley, the high dissected dolerite plateau of Mt Field (1434m) includes the Mt Field National Park of 16977 hectares. This is an easily accessible mountain area with a rather rough road going to Lake Dobson at 1000m not far from winter ski slopes. There are a number of marked walking tracks to most of the rocky summits and there are abundant boulders to scramble on. In winter a few gully climbs have been done and all the higher ridges can be traversed on ski although good conditions of ice and snow do not occur every year.

Mt Anne (1425m) the highest peak in the SW ranges is 40km further S and impressively isolated. The steep pyramidal top projects 200m above the N end of the Mt Eliza plateau but the E side is a broken dolerite wall of 600m. Because of



10 *S face of Mount Anne (This and next 2 photos: R. G. Williams)*

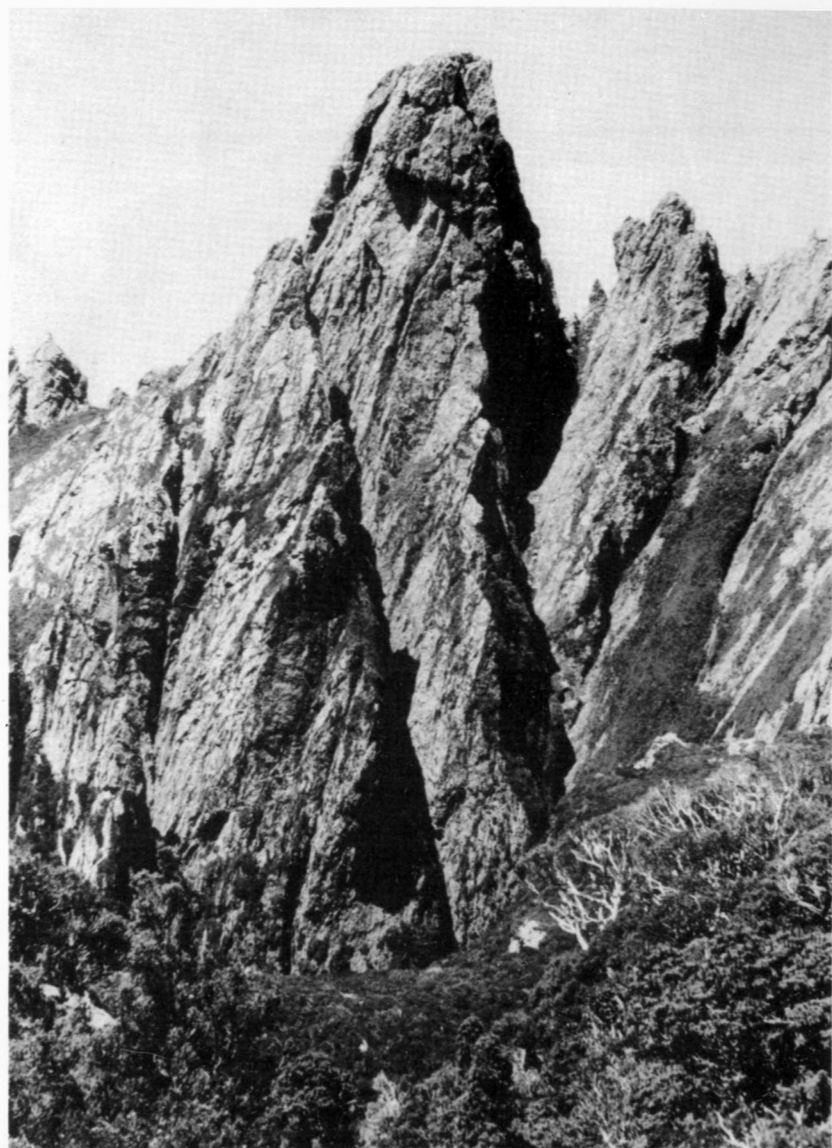
inaccessibility the mountain was not climbed until 1929, but from the present road at Condominium Creek the ascent by a route cairned almost to the summit is a popular but very long day. On the S face of the final pyramid, the easy rock ledges of summer may in winter become a steep slope of hard frozen snow.

The most notable peak in the SW of Tasmania is 35km further S. This jagged quartzite tower of only 1224m in the E Arthur Range was called The Obelisk by Sprent about 1850 but renamed Federation Peak by Moore in 1901. Because of even greater inaccessibility it was not climbed until 1949. Although it may now be reached in less than 2 days walking from a logging road in the Picton valley, the fickle weather on the exposed approaches often delays and may even prevent an ascent. The quartzite rock on Federation has an unusually abrasive texture. It is firm and interlaced with pockets of harder quartz. The established climbing routes are on the NW face but the 600m Blade Ridge is the longest single climb in Tasmania.

The W Arthur Range is a 15km ridge of jagged quartzite seldom dropping below 900m and with several peaks around 1100m. There are good rock climbs of 100m on Mt Hayes, Procyon Peak and Mt Hesperus. The traverse of the range is a strenuous mountain walk of a week or more and violent storms on the exposed route with snow even in summer may mean considerable delays in completing it.

The SE coast of Tasmania has some remarkable sea cliffs with a number of tall stacks of dolerite rising directly out of the water. These cliffs are not too far from Hobart and despite some loose rocks from weathering many very fine climbs have been done on them.

At Courts Bay near Cap Bruny about 20 routes of up to 50m have been recorded and there are many more lines yet to be climbed. At Fluted Cape near Adventure Bay

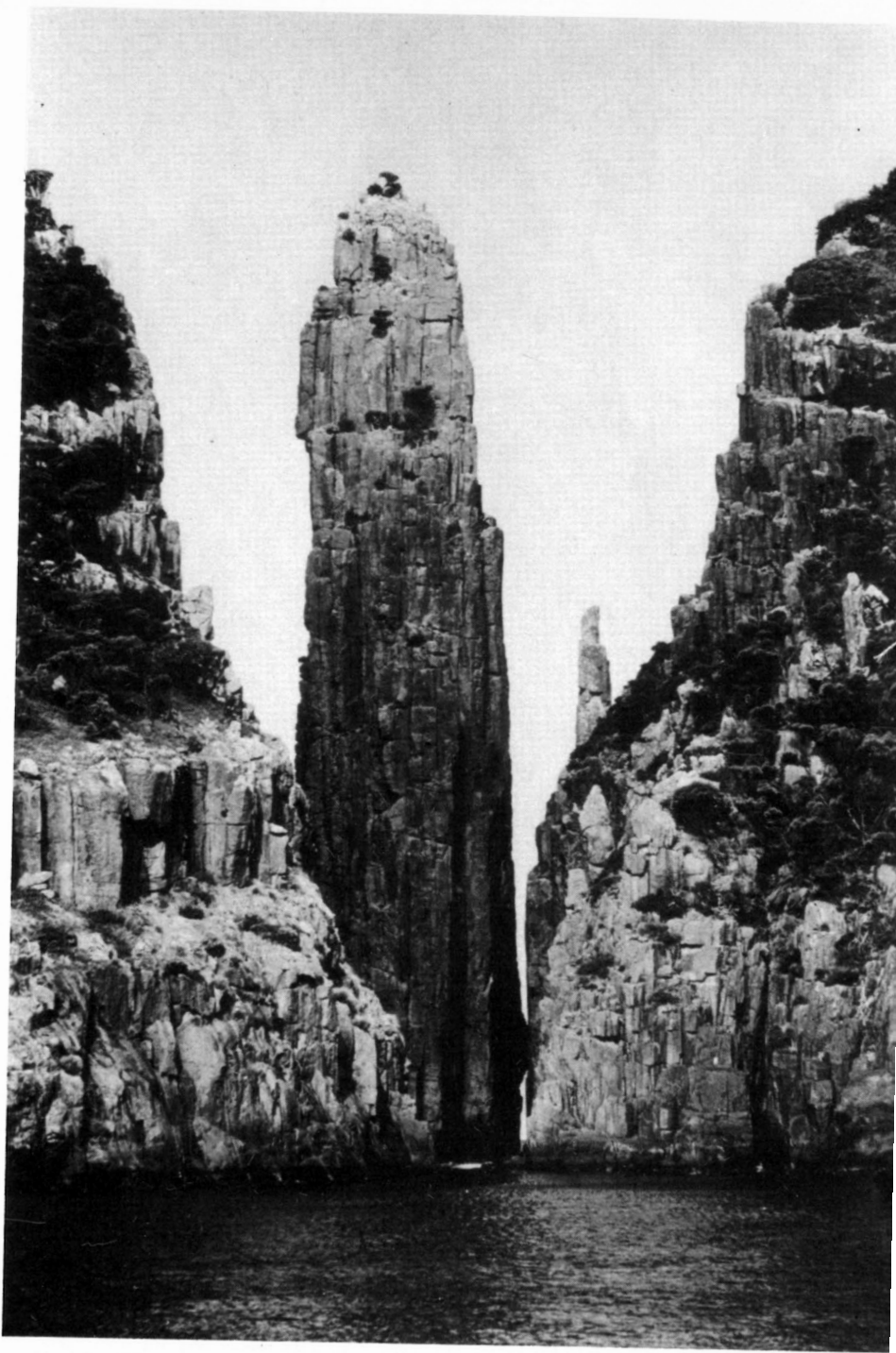


11 *Federation Peak*

where Furneaux landed in 1773, the longer 100m climbs are much harder.

Cape Raoul on the SW of the Tasman Peninsula is at the extremity of a scrubby flat topped headland flanked by bare sea cliffs 250m high. The Cape comprises a 500m long ridge of irregular dolerite towers approached by a 200m descent of the terminal headland cliffs. The Cape ridge then rises to the 160m high Wedding Cake and ends with the four 30m matchstick Pillars of Hercules all the summits of which have not been completely climbed although a low level traverse has been used to reach a final platform around the end of the Cape where the seals bark loudly and smell strongly.

Cape Pillar, the SE extremity of the Tasman Peninsula, is the most remarkable



12 Sea cliffs—Mitre, Candlestick etc

headland of this coast and is formed by vertical dolerite columns rising 300m to a flat top bare of scrub. The vertical wall of The Chasm cut 100m into the full height of the cliffs was climbed for the first time in 1979. A long descent at the tip of the Cape to a low tide causeway leads to Cathedral Rock an 80m dolerite column sticking out of the Tasman Sea and as yet ascended 3 times only, by its SE corner.

Cape Hauy a little to the N is a narrow peninsula with a group of small islands at its tip, the Lanterns which include 2 vertical dolerite stacks. The larger stack the Candlestick is 30m in diameter and rises 120m directly out of the sea to the top which is level with the cliffs of the Cape only 50m away. The first climb in 1967 was made using a 90m high rope traverse from the Cape cliffs to the further away island, Mitre Rock. The rope was slung so as to give access to a solitary ledge high up on the Candlestick. Two subsequent parties have swum through the kelp and across the 30m channel to a ledge at the base of the Candlestick and made the ascent completely from sea level. The smaller stack, the Totem Pole is connected to the foot of the Cape by a 6m long low tide causeway which can be reached only by two 30m and 20m abseils down the Cape cliffs. Matchstick in proportions, the Totem Pole is only 4 x 3m at its base but rises to a height of 62m and has been called the most spectacular sea stack climb in Australia. The first ascent in 1968 followed thin very shallow intermittent crack lines alternating on 2 of the faces to a high 2 x 1m bivouac ledge. On the final 4m pitch the solitary crack opened alarmingly when pegging was attempted. The 3rd ascent done over 3 weekends in 1979 took 15 hours of hard climbing and the 7 old rusted bolts were replaced with stainless steel. Two nut placements were used in the expanding top crack.

Along the N half of the E coast the shoreline rocks are granite. The most prominent of the coastal mountains are The Hazards in the coastal Freycinet National Park and the red granite of the two highest peaks Mt Dove (485m) and Mt Amos are an attractive background to the sheltered water or the sandy beach at Coles Bay. On the Hazards Main Wall there are 10 routes of up to 300m and nearly 30 routes on Amos and the Sow Spur of Dove. On the ocean side of the peninsula the long Sea Level Traverse from Sleepy Bay to Wineglass Bay has one pitch which requires swimming in a calm sea—and it is seldom calm. At Bluestone bay just N of Cape Tourville there are some 30 routes of up to 60m on White Water Wall which is of a quite different grey granite. Easy access by road and a variety of granite routes has made Coles Bay very popular for sea cliff climbing.

Tasmania's little mountains without any glaciers are not gentle but they provide a range of mountaineering activity from easy mountain walking to sustained and severe rock climbing—with scrub bashing thrown in for choice—and with no choice the changeable weather of the roaring forties.

Acknowledgements

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