

The first climb on the Kinloss team was made in 1957, starting from the top of the Kinloss and Great Wagon, and the second route of the team was made a month later on the Kinloss, starting from the top of the Kinloss and Great Wagon.

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Ben Nevis Notes

Haunt of the Tiger: A Record of Recent Developments on Polldubh Crags. Before reading these notes, reference should be made to 'The Rock Playground of Lochaber,' an article by J. Ness in the 1951 issue of the *Journal* (xxiii, 323) giving the early history and routes on these fine crags, which deserve more popularity. When shrouded in mist the high cliffs of the north face of Ben Nevis are often wet, cold and forbidding; whereas Polldubh usually welcomes the climber with warmth and sunshine because of its southern aspect and low altitude. Even in showery weather the crags can give fine climbing and soon dry off; and there are many caves and overhangs. Combinations of routes can afford as much as 1000 ft. of climbing. For example, a combination of Burma Road on Pinnacle Ridge with Pandora and Crag Lough Grooves (or Kinloss Grooves and Enigma) on High Crag will give Hard Severe and Very Severe climbing for 890 ft. With a little imagination the same method can be used to link routes of lower grades.

A great many of the newest routes are in the highest grades, but this is what has been needed on Polldubh for some time. Some of the old routes have been found to be easier than their gradings would suggest and are suitable for the more moderate climber. Up to the time of the recent explorations there were no graded routes of interest to the rock 'tiger'; this has now been remedied. The down-grading of some of the old routes is due mainly to the use of rubber soles. This is necessary in order to achieve some sort of standardisation. Climbs previously classed as Severe and meriting only Very Difficult standard are: Route I on Hangover Buttress, Secretary's Crack and Pine Wall. The Pinnacle Ridge gradings are correct.

The R.A.F. Mountain Rescue teams have figured prominently in the recent developments. In October 1953 the R.A.F. Mountain Rescue Summer Course was held at Steall, and several days' training were spent on Polldubh. At least three parties climbed a route on what is now called High Crag. Dan Stewart was the first to find the route which traversed by a narrow heather ledge on to the crag above the initial steep section and followed the slabs (which are now the middle section of Crag Lough Grooves) to the terrace below the second tier.

In the summer of 1957, along with other members of the Kinloss team, I did two new routes on Hangover Buttress. One was quite a hard free climb, the other a very interesting artificial route. On the artificial climb free climbing led up to an overhanging roof. Using pegs driven up into the roof, a traverse was made to the lip on *étrier*. The crack above still overhung and had to be pegged until it was possible to finish up a very delicate slab. Care was needed with rope management or the leader found that rope-drag made it impossible for him to continue up the slab!

In 1958 John Alexander (then officer in charge of the team) and I discovered Styx Buttress, not a very big buttress but very clean and, owing to its overhangs, impressive. We climbed two grand routes, Damnation and Doomsday, both Very Severe. These climbs really marked the advent of hard free climbing on Polldubh.

Easter 1959 saw the start of a fresh wave of exploration. It began when Terry Sullivan of the Fell & Rock C.C., who had recently joined the Kinloss team, and I rediscovered High Crag. We noticed an obvious weakness in the lowest overhanging section of the buttress—a groove. I led the first pitch to the foot of the overhangs. Sullivan led the next 70 ft., a superb pitch, which was very sustained. By delicately crossing three steep rock ribs, the groove was entered. Determined climbing led up the groove until, when things were getting really harrowing, a perfect but awkward thread-runner gave protection for the rest of this exacting pitch. Pleasant slabs (previously climbed by Dan Stewart) led up to the terrace which separates the two main tiers of the buttress. The next section was overhanging, but an undercut and outward sloping gangway led up to the right. By using Sullivan's shoulder I gained the gangway and traversed up. Two pitons were needed to round a corner where I was able to use a small stance and a piton belay to bring up Sullivan. He was, however, unable to reach the gangway and eventually had to use a wooden wedge and sling. The groove above the belay overhung and was holdless, but Sullivan climbed confidently up on friction holds and turned the overhang. This was the last hard pitch, and glorious slabs led us up to the summit of the buttress. Sullivan called the route Crag Lough Grooves in honour of his home club. It is the finest and the hardest route on the crags; in its 500 ft. are three long pitches of Very Severe standard.

During the next few weeks development was fast and furious. Many of the existing crags were worked out and new ones discovered. Now, though possibilities for good routes still exist, most of the best lines have been climbed, and are recorded in the New Climbs section of this issue.

As a rough indication, the following list may be used. Climbs are in order of difficulty:—

VERY SEVERE: Crag Lough Grooves, Last Word, Storm, Fidelity, Phantom Slab, Kinloss Grooves, The Paunch, Resurrection, Vampire, Damnation, Doomsday, Iche, Hot Tin Roof, Route III on Hangover Buttress.

HARD SEVERE: Burma Road, Hawk's Nest, Enigma, Route II on Hangover, Repton.

SEVERE: Pandora, Repton, Flying Dutchman, Degradation, Nutcracker

The first break in the overhang was followed by an upward

movement in the air on the left. The second break was then followed

by a third break. The third break was followed by a fourth break.

Each break is a ledge or overhang that the climber has to climb. The

climber has to climb the first break, then the second, then the third,

then the fourth, then the fifth, then the sixth, then the seventh, then

Ben Nevis: Polldubh Crags.—For an introduction to the following

High Crag.—Seen from Pinnacle Ridge, this is the large two-tier

Crag Lough Grooves. 500 ft. Very Severe. T. Sullivan & I. Clough

Keeps mainly to left side of buttress, starting to left of a cave overhang

(1) 40 ft. Climb small corner to stance and belay beneath overhangs.
(2) 75 ft. Traverse 10 ft. right over ribs into a groove; up this to heather

Kinloss Grooves. 240 ft. Very Severe. I. Clough & T. Sullivan (through

Starts at the first obvious break in the overhang right of Crag Lough

(1) 50 ft. Up groove to small stance beneath overhang; piton belay in

Enigma. 270 ft. Hard Severe. T. Sullivan & I. Clough (through leads).
11th April 1959.

On the second tier; starts at right end of grassy terrace to left of a big

Up the slab to a heather groove at 30 ft.; traverse up left for 30 ft. to



POLLDUBH CRAGS, GLEN NEVIS

A, Secretary's Buttress. B, Cavalry Crack Buttress. C, Pinnacle
Ridge. D, Repton. E, Pandora. F, High Crag. G, Spike.
H, Pine Wall. J, Styx. (After I. Clough.)

The Paunch. 240 ft. Very Severe. I. Clough. 5th April 1959.

On the second tier; starts round the corner left of the gangway on Crag

Up strenuous overhang to stance and belay at 60 ft. Then 20 ft. to tree

Hot Tin Roof. 220 ft. Very Severe. T. Sullivan & I. Clough. 2nd

Starts 6 ft. right of Kinloss Grooves; the third break.
(1) 100 ft. Up fault to heather ledge; traverse left 10 ft., then up to

Hawk's Nest. 195 ft. Hard Severe. I. Clough & E. Buckley. 21st

On the second tier, starting 40 ft. above The Paunch.

(1) 15 ft. Up to ledge with large blocks; thread belay. (2) 60 ft. On to ledge and down slab; turn corner, using wedge, piton and slings. Swing into groove beneath roof and descend until above hawk's nest. Up gangway on right, turn corner and traverse to tree belay. (3) 60 ft. Climb gully above to chock belay. (4) 60 ft. Climb cracked wall on left to ledge on buttress edge, then up slabs.

Styx Buttress.—This is the steep buttress with several overhangs, to right of Pine Wall. Two routes, Doomsday and Damnation, were described in the 1959 *S.M.C.J.* (xxvi, 375).

Resurrection. 140 ft. Very Severe. I. Clough & A. R. Lakin. 5th April 1959.

Follows the long tapering slab up the left-hand side of the buttress (cairn); of sustained difficulty.

Fidelity. 140 ft. Very Severe. I. Clough & T. Sullivan (through leads). 11th April 1959.

Starts 15 ft. right of diagonal heather groove splitting front of buttress; cairn.

Up edge of slab to tree belay; directly up rib on left of heather niche (belay); up middle of slab.

Iche. 120 ft. Very Severe. T. Sullivan & I. Clough. 11th April 1959. Starts to right of the diagonal heather groove.

Up slab to poor stance (belay at right end of overhang); traverse left, up thin crack to tree runner, then upwards left to top.

Tykes' Climb. 160 ft. Very Difficult. E. Buckley & I. Clough. 20th April 1959.

Starts at left-hand edge of buttress.

Up middle of 30-ft. slab, then up shattered ridge to ledge (belay); climb above, past dead tree, and up ridge.

Repton. 150 ft. Hard Severe. T. Sullivan, E. Buckley & A. Flegg. 27th March 1959.

A line of rounded overhangs is conspicuous. Up middle of face to stance and tree belay below overhangs; traverse left for 30 ft., then up corner to stance and tree belay; up small corner behind, break out right and so to top.

Pandora's Buttress.—The second buttress above Pinnacle Ridge.

Pandora. 230 ft. Severe. I. Clough & E. Buckley. 20th April 1959. On the left of the buttress.

One hundred feet up clean slabs on left to large stance (belay high on right). Then up corner above for 10 ft., traverse to left edge and follow rib; round corner, traverse below trees to other corner and climb wall above to tree belays. Finally, up delicate slab on left.

Dental Groove. 110 ft. Severe. I. Clough & E. Buckley. 20th April 1959.

The obvious heathery groove half-way up left-hand face of buttress.

Difficult, up to tree belay; continue up groove to join Pandora, then up wall to tree belays; climb slab on left.

Phantom Slab. 190 ft. Very Severe. T. Sullivan & I. Clough (through leads). 3rd May 1959.

Starts (arrow) at foot of rib left of, and 100 ft. above, the start of Pandora.

(1) 60 ft. Climb edge of rib. (2) 60 ft. Cross to foot of Dental Groove and climb this to tree belay. (3) 70 ft. A bold lead up steep slab on left.

Flying Dutchman. 220 ft. Severe. T. Sullivan & I. Clough (through leads). 3rd May 1959.

Starts at rock tongue below and to right of Pandora.

Up ridge crest to grass terrace (tree belay); then climb slabs on left, passing small skyline tree.

Degradation. 230 ft. Severe. I. Clough & T. Sullivan (through leads). 3rd May 1959.

Follow slabs to right of Flying Dutchman; not a very good climb.

Pinnacle Ridge.

Mechanic's Institute. 145 ft. Severe & A. 2. I. Clough, A. R. Lakin & A. Parkin. 5th April 1959.

Starts to right of beginning of Severe Slab route, up 30 ft. corner overhanging by 10 ft.

Artificial climbing up corner, with free finish on good pull-up holds; continue to tree belay. Then left round corner and up middle of wall (crossing ordinary route) to belay on floor of scoop. Climb crack on right, pull round on to slab and finish up this.

Burma Road. 160 ft. Hard Severe. I. Clough & E. Buckley. 20th April 1959.

Starts between Severe Slab and Mechanic's Institute routes.

Climb slab to corner, reach holly and fight through subsequent jungle to overhang; climb right wall to stance and tree belay. Traverse right along heather ledge to belay (arrow). Climb slabs straight.

Cavalry Crack Buttress.

Storm. 300 ft. Very Severe. I. Clough & T. Sullivan (through leads). 3rd May 1959.

Starts at left-hand edge of the buttress.

(1) 100 ft. Up steep left-hand groove for 20 ft., then cross to right-hand groove, following it to ledge below diagonal crack; belays. (2) 100 ft. Climb crack 25 ft., then awkwardly to right and traverse left up to prominent pine; belay. (Alternatively, continue up crack after 25 ft.) (3) 50 ft. Up groove right of pine; three pitons used to climb wall above, leading to second groove; piton belay on buttress edge. (4) 50 ft. A delicate groove on left

leads to top. (Possible escape to right from pine by stomach traverse, making climb Hard Severe.)

Vampire. 320 ft. Very Severe. I. Clough & E. Buckley. 21st April 1959.

Starts 30 ft. right of left edge of buttress (cairn and arrow).

(1) 25 ft. Climb wall to ledge and tree belay. (2) 75 ft. Up rib on left (arrow) into groove; spike runner. Trend to left over slabs to block runner. Gain pine tree on left; belay. Walk 25 ft. to foot of groove. (3) 100 ft. Climb groove, then up wall, bearing left on good holds. Finish at escape from Storm; spike belays. (4) 120 ft. Climb slabs, keeping left for best climbing.

Heat Wave. 370 ft. Very Difficult. I. Clough, Miss J. Pickering, C. Anderson, R. Henson, P. Brocklehurst & R. Porteous. 22nd May 1959.

Starts at left-hand edge of buttress.

Climb groove (with holly at foot) for 20 ft., then step left into other groove and, reaching a tree, climb up to heather ledge below diagonal crack of Storm (belays). Traverse right, round corner to ledge and tree belay below vegetatious gully. Climb gully a few feet, then up wall and slabs on left to ledge and belays; thence up slabs.

Secretary's Crack Buttress.

Secretary's Buttress, Direct. 280 ft. Mild Severe. I. Clough & E. Buckley. 21st April 1959.

Starts at front of buttress, up a smooth slab corner, then following thin central crack to top of Secretary's Crack, finishing up the slabs of that route.

Last Word. 70 ft. Very Severe. I. Clough. 22nd May 1959.

A hard alternative to first pitch of previous route. Below Secretary's Crack is a parallel crack. Last Word takes the steep wall below this.

Scimitar Buttress.—Nutcracker Chimney and Diagonal Crack (*S.M.C.J.*, xxvi, 272) are on this buttress.

Wanderlust. 120 ft. Very Difficult. I. Clough. 22nd April 1959.

Starts to right of Diagonal Crack at holly bush, following up fault, then traversing up left across Diagonal Crack and finishing up a rib.

Little Buttress.—The small buttress to right of top of Pandora's Buttress. Surmounting the climbs on this buttress is a pleasant ridge.

Spike. 160 ft. Very Difficult. I. Clough, P. Brocklehurst, R. Henson & R. Porteous. 29th May 1959.

Starts up clean slabs on front of buttress to tree; thence climbs up and traverses to buttress edge; stance and belay above. Finishes straight up (arrowed) slab above; belay.

Tutor's Rib. 160 ft. Mild Severe. I. Clough. 29th May 1959.

Traverses right after a few feet of Spike route, then goes straight up the rib and finally up slab some 10 ft. right of Spike.

CLIMBS

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