



This extract from a Climbers' Club Journal contains only articles/photographs where the copyright now belongs to the Climbers' Club.

It is provided in electronic form for your personal use and cannot be used for commercial profit without seeking permission from the Climbers' Club.

© Copyright 2010

## CORRESPONDENCE.

*To the Editor of the CLIMBERS' CLUB JOURNAL.*

“ROCK CLIMBING IN NORTH WALES” (by Messrs. Abraham).

DEAR SIR,

It may be open to question whether much value is commonly attached to historical detail in narratives of climbs, but there can be little doubt of the real difficulty of maintaining a uniformly high level of accuracy throughout a book on the subject. So far from indicating any lack of appreciation, it should argue precisely the reverse, if strong preferences are thrown to the winds, and a few lapses from a purely ideal standard are pointed out, with a view to future rectification, in Part I. of the interesting book that has recently appeared on North Wales.

In his story of the Devil's Kitchen, the writer states that “*he has of recent years carefully followed the history of Twell Du, but has only been able, up to the present, to hear of two successful attempts*” upon the side wall, “*both of which he has duly chronicled.*” There is a hiatus in the chronicle. The Devil's Kitchen was climbed on August 7th, 1901, when the rocks were wet, by a climber single-handed, without aid, or rope, or previous knowledge. The whole pitch from beginning to end, as timed by friends below, was done, on that occasion, in 21 minutes.

The same place was again climbed by a pair of climbers on August 13th, 1903.

As definite climbs do not abound on the Bochllwyd side of Tryfân, all will approve the writer's judgment in describing the excellent little climb now called the “*Western Gully,*” and some will have the pleasure of recognising here a very old friend with a new title. It may be useful to note that in its upper reach the gully forks; the left branch contains a good pitch of the ladder type, and, when not occupied by a charming cascade, it is generally deemed preferable to the right branch. A little to the North of this lies a second gully,

nearly parallel, but continuous from the scree to the Nor' Nor' Notch. This is referred to as an "easy boulder-filled cleft," but it has a noteworthy pitch in its lower section, and parties who ascend the former unlinked prefer to be roped for the descent of it.

Between the two confusion may arise, which the new name is less likely to dispel than the old names of North and South cleft, particularly as the word Western is applicable only in a sense different from that conveyed by North and South on the other side of the mountain.

To return to history, the first ascent was made in 1894, the gully was climbed again, by an unusually large party, on May 22nd, 1899, and we now learn that "*the first recorded ascent was made in the spring of 1905.*" The question may be safely left to the casuist, but the facts are interesting in that they serve to illustrate the habits of North Wales Climbers, and possibly the last statement may be taken as a legitimate protest against them.

In my account of the Great Gully of Craig yr Ysfa (*Climbers' Journal*, Vol. iv., page 112), I described it as a "deeply cut gully that strikes the face from base to summit." It appears that this description greatly intrigued the writer and finally brought about "*his undoing for that day at any rate,*" but at a later date he discovered that "*it starts 200 feet above the base of the crags.*" If this were so, as there is no question of traversing, it must surely follow that 200 feet of crag climbing will be necessary in order to reach it. Is this so? It is vexing to miss a good climb, and I sincerely regret to have been the cause of disappointment. The error might be made by anyone who regards the base of a mountain as a point instead of a line. To avoid the possibility of mistake, it would be well for climbers to consult the admirable photograph of the face which enables them to see distinctly the position of the gully, and, if so minded, to estimate for themselves the accuracy of my description.

Now that the merits of the Great Gully have been reasserted, it will doubtless be much visited at all seasons of the year, but climbers should not infer from the remark that "*several sections were partly hidden by snow on the first ascent,*" that they may reckon upon snow as an ally at Easter. There is, in fact, scarcely any gathering ground, and at the time of the first ascent, which was made at Easter in a normal year, none whatever was found anywhere below the "Crux of the Climb," nor any above it that did not prove a hindrance.

In the course of the writer's interesting description of the details of the gully, he says of the Black Chimney that it "*was used by former parties to circumvent the real pitch,*" adding later that "*the more difficult way, straight up the pitch, offered much pleasanter climbing.*" The history is scarcely correct, but the hint as to route is valuable, and the view taken is fully endorsed by the party who, on a visit to the gully in Sept., 1901, took precisely this route up the "*real pitch*" and made reference to it in the *Climbers' Journal* for March, 1902. It follows that the Doorway Pitch, "*now the only unclimbed obstacle in the Great Gully,*" has enjoyed this unique distinction for a lustrum. Anyone who shall legitimately achieve its ascent will be glad to know that the pitch has a time-honoured reputation for difficulty.

If ascents of the gully by night are going to become fashionable, it may be of service to add that the hole of exit from the final cave should be mentally located on the right (not left) side of one looking up the gully from Cwm Eigiau.

This, or any further, trifling contribution to the common fund of detailed information should not be regarded as indicating indifference to the merits of the recent publication, but rather as proof of appreciation of it.

In my opinion, the book will be of great utility to all who use it for climbing in North Wales.

I am, Dear Sir,

Yours truly,

J. M. ARCHER THOMSON.

*To the Editor of the CLIMBERS' CLUB JOURNAL.*

SIR,

THE HIGH TOR GULLY.

Nothing could be gained by continuing this controversy, but I should like to say that all the statements I have made on the subject are strictly correct, and I could easily substantiate their accuracy to the satisfaction of any impartial authority.

Faithfully yours,

WILLIAM SMITHARD.

15 Cromwell Road,  
Derby, *May*, 1906.

