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Author: L J Oppenheimer

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WARN GHYLL, BUTTERMERE.

By L. J. O.

FIVE or six years ago, in describing some attempts to ascend Stack Ghyll, I mentioned two other fine gullies to the left of it. The Y shaped one—nearest to Green Crag—was tried a year or two after Stack Ghyll succumbed, but the rock is so rotten that, after climbing up for 150 feet, we were glad enough to get safely down again. In the central gully the rock for the most part is sound, and the middle pitches look formidable, yet, as far as I know, there had been only two attacks on it (neither of them very determined ones) before May 24th, 1907, when the first ascent was made by Messrs. Fred. Botterill, Adam Fox, J. R. Scott, T. Shaw and myself.

The start is not at all imposing. It is a narrow vertical chimney, 25 to 30 feet high, very innocent looking, and thrust out so that it allows of only a glimpse of the deep gully behind higher up. At the top of this chimney—level with a broad platform—is a chockstone over which poured a small stream of water, not very conspicuous, but we noticed that Botterill in leading up kept as far out of the chimney as he could to avoid it, and did not pause long at the chockstone, which, through being smooth and waterworn, is a little awkward to get over. Above the sloping platform comes an easy 10 feet pitch, and then the gully begins to lead deeply into the cliff. The third pitch is about 25 feet, and can be climbed without much difficulty on the right wall. At the top a whiff from the remains of a dead sheep, which must have fallen from the summit of the cliff, made us hurry on to the foot of the most imposing pitch in the gully—a black cleft 70 or 80 feet high, down which water falls plentifully,

and, touching here and there, is sprayed over the walls. The first 40 feet can be chimneyed, passing through the waterfall. Then the right wall opens out, and it becomes necessary to climb up to a sloping ledge on it. Botterill was perched on this for a long time considering what ought to be the next move. He found a lizard running about over the vertical rocks, and would have been glad if he could have climbed the next fifteen feet in a similar manner. Looked at from below, a good row of holds a little above him seemed to form a hand-traverse leading back to the top chockstone, but from where he was he could see that they were on big blocks resting very insecurely on a ledge, and ready to come down at a pull and sweep us all out of the gully. He came to the conclusion that he would need a shoulder, and, descending to us for a rest, asked me to go up and see what I thought of it. I found that everything looked much worse than from below, and was soon convinced that Shaw would be able to give him much more assistance than I should, so I came down again, fairly drenched. Shaw, having got on to the sloping ledge, thought he could manage. Botterill then followed him and climbed on to his shoulders, whence by a very difficult upward traverse to the left he avoided the row of almost overhanging loose blocks, and got above the chockstone. He was still not in a good place for belaying, and went 80 feet higher, up mossy rocks which were steep but not difficult, to reach a good belay. Shaw then followed, and stayed at the top of the chockstone to direct and assist the rest of us. I came next and found the piece above the ledge very trying even with a good deal of help from the rope. The loose blocks were just where I wanted to go, but they had to be carefully avoided. Having got up I passed Shaw and relieved Botterill at the belay, while he took stock of what was to follow. The next man happened to touch one of the blocks and over it went, crashing down the gully. Luckily Scott was in a sheltered corner. Being the last he had the enjoyment of hurling down the remaining dangers to future parties, and discovered in their place a few useful holds.

We were now 250 feet up, and able to see the finish 150 feet or more above us. The greater part of it went well enough. Two or three chimneys in quick succession led to the final pitch in the left hand corner of the gully. From lower down it had by no means an unyielding look, but the higher we got the steeper it seemed, and now we were up to it we found something like the corner of a room—a very rottenly built corner too—30 or 40 feet high, and overhanging at the top. No one suggested trying it. Botterill traversed 20 feet to the right, and attempted to get up the rock wall there. This also failed. Shaw and Scott were on another rope 50 feet below us, and Botterill asked them to make for the foot of a grassy chimney, which led out at the right-hand corner of the gully. They reported that it might possibly go, and he descended to join them. He then climbed half-way up the grassy chimney, and, if fine weather had continued, might have succeeded; but a thunderstorm suddenly burst over us, and though we had been quite sufficiently soaked, in the difficult pitch below, to be careless of the rain, the torrents which came down made the chimney unsafe. Botterill asked Shaw and Scott to go down again and try still farther to the right, and we followed them up a very steep rib of rock and heather, ending at the cliff-top in a small chimney, which should be pleasant enough in normal weather, but which was just then like a funnel down which a waterspout was being poured, and through this we had to pass to reach the summit.

This last hundred feet cannot be considered a very satisfactory finish to the climb, but all the rest—particularly the Lizard chimney—is very fine. It is undoubtedly more difficult than its neighbour, Stack Ghyll, though the direct ascent of the first pitch of the latter, without using an ice axe or looped rope, would I think quite equalise them.

“Warnscale Ghyll” was suggested for the gully’s name, but was cut down by the majority to “Warn Ghyll.”

Three days before this ascent some of us tried another new climb in the same district, but were not so successful. In No. 20 of the *Climbers’ Club Journal* I described an

interesting little gully and a difficult chimney in Birkness Combe, between High Crag and High Stile, and mentioned another very steep and straight Central Chimney on the same rock. Dr. Taylor, Messrs. F. Botterill, G. R. West and I attempted it (Botterill leading) on May 21st—a most unseasonable day, the tops being as white as in early winter. It took us five hours to get up the first 200 feet, which consisted of vertical chimneys separated by stretches of very steep and treacherous grass, on which lay snow that always numbed our fingers for the following pitch. Then we were turned back by a 30 feet cleft, with smooth walls and overhanging back. Botterill thought it might be circumvented on the left in better weather, but he tried in vain up the cold wet rocks, while snow, hail and rain beat down on us in turns. Above the cleft, which stopped us, there appeared to be another twice or three times the height, and as uncompromising in character. It was not at all easy to retrace our steps, and altogether we were seven hours in the chimney.

I should like to take this chance to hint that Buttermere does not get from most climbers the attention it deserves. Of course, it cannot compare with Wastdale Head as a centre, but, setting Wastdale aside, it is second to no place in Lakeland. It has as great a variety of climbs within easy reach as the head of Borrowdale, and far greater than Langdale or Coniston, the one of which, though delightful for ascents of moderate difficulty, has little that can be spoken of in superlatives, while the other has next to nothing else. From Buttermere, the Shamrock and the climbs on the north and west sides of Pillar are as easily and quickly reached as from Wastdale, and, though rather long, there is no better way to the Ennerdale cliffs on Gable than by the Warnscale track and Brandreth. For beauty of wood and water and bare hill-side the valley is hard to beat, and the same may be said of the unpretentious comfort of its inns and farms. Our party there at Whitweek included eight members of this Club, three lady climbers and a couple of novices, besides several who preferred hill-rambling and boating, and all found enough

to do there to make them wish the holiday many times as long.

For the beginner there are a number of easy chimneys near the Scarth Gap end of the Haystacks, and there is a delightful rake running up the cliff from near the foot of the big stack to the top of Stack Ghyll. On Grassmoor, facing Scale Hill, there are two easy gullies, seven or eight hundred feet high, with plenty of interesting little pitches, and up the best of these (the one nearest to Buttermere) we took the novices and two of the ladies for their first day. Another day we took them in three parties up the North Climb on the Pillar, and in spite of a late start and an enormous amount of waiting for one another, through having so many on the climb, we managed to get back and finish dinner before midnight, which parties at Wastdale have not always succeeded in doing. The Central Chimney and Doctor's Chimney on Gable made a much shorter day. But there is no need to go out of the valley itself to find good things. There are the two gullies in Bleaberry Combe, first climbed by Messrs. O. G. Jones and J. W. Robinson; Birkness Crag Chimney and Gully, between High Stile and High Crag; Stack Ghyll and Warn Ghyll on the Haystacks; Mr. Robinson's fine gully on Green Crag; another with two very stiff pitches on Fleetwith facing Warnscale, and many a climb still waiting to be attacked.