

Sub-Cneifion Rib (VD)
climber unknown SIMON CARDY



Cwm Cneifion Cwm of the Flocks or Clippings

High above Cwm Idwal, contained by the West Face of Y Gribin and the eastern flank of Senior's Ridge, is the wild and rugged Cwm Cneifion. It is the highest cwm on Glyderau Fawr, whose summit is but a short way from its upper reaches. When seen from the lake shore, the slender spur of Sub-Cneifion Rib stands like a rocky sentinel guarding the entrance to the cwm, and nearly two kilometres further up, the shadowy form of Clogwyn Du commands the headwall. Between them, the two crags offer most of the best climbing in the cwm, but are very different in character. The Sub-Cneifion Rib is at its best in the afternoon or evening sunlight, and the short pitches of Scimitar Crack Buttress take full advantage of this. Clogwyn Du on the other hand offers more serious fare. Its terrific main face is climbed by several steep routes with exposure to rival the East Buttress of Cloggy. The summer sun moves off the face early, leaving a more subdued light that adds its own subtle trait to the commitment felt on the routes here. One other line stands out: *Cneifion Arête* on the West Face of Y Gribin gives a classic ascent from the cwm to the ridge, in the scrambling/mountaineering mould.

The most recent developments in the cwm have been lower down, on the newly-named Craig y Cerddin, which now boasts one of the modern classics of the Ogwen area.

The name **Cwm Cneifion** derives from the fact that early sheep farmers used to shear out on the mountain. Despite this well-established name, for many years it has also been called the Nameless Cwm, a name which is still printed on the OS map.

Ice and Rocks

The spectacular scenery of y Glyderau, including the classic U-shaped glaciated valley of the Nant Ffrancon, has been carved by glaciers. On the western side of Nant Ffrancon is a series of cirques generally facing the same direction, which have been eroded by small glaciers, whereas on the eastern side of Nant Ffrancon there are none. This is due both to the lack of sunshine on the western side which allowed snow to accumulate and form glaciers, and also to the structure within the rocks. The largest cirque is Cwm Idwal, where an impressive syncline can easily be seen on the back wall with the rocks along the side all dipping in towards the centre of the cirque forming the downfold. Ever since Charles Darwin visited Cwm Idwal in the middle of the nineteenth century, y Glyderau has been important for the study of glaciation. Around the floor of Cwm Idwal there are numerous mounds of rock fragments and clay. These are moraines deposited and shaped by glaciers. Also around the site there is further evidence of the eroding power of the glaciers in the form of ice-smoothed rock with glacial scratches.

U-shaped Valley MIKE BAILEY



Cwm Cneifion

Approach The cwm is approached directly from the Idwal Slabs path. After the gate in the wall at the water's edge, a track leads up the steep slopes on the left towards the Sub-Cneifion Rib. To reach the upper cwm, scramble up the rocks just right of the rib and continue on a well-marked path, which becomes less distinct beyond the foot of *Cneifion Arête*.

The Sub-Cneifion Rib

(OS Ref 648 592)

Aspect	North-west.
Altitude	550 metres.
Approach Time	30 minutes.
Summer Sun	Afternoon and evening. One of the most idyllic spots in the cwm in sunny conditions.
Winter Sun	No.
Drying	The clean rock and lack of vegetation make this area one of the fastest drying in the cwm.

Scimitar Crack Buttress

Up and left of the foot of the main rib is a clean rectangular buttress featuring the straight and prominent *Scimitar Crack*. Several excellent short pitches make this sunny corner ideal for an afternoon or evening visit.

Descent The grassy slope left of the buttress provides a simple descent.

Pickpocket 24m VS 4a † (8.9.96)

The top left-hand facet of the crag is formed by a pocketed slab with overhangs on its left side. The slab leads up and left to a smaller continuation. Pleasant climbing but the protection is sparse. Start at the lowest point of the slab. Climb up and then diagonally left to the top of the crag. A deviation to the right allows protection to be placed in a wide crack.

★ **The Sublime Line** 28m E3 5c (31.5.97)

A very good pitch up the arête left of *Scimitar Crack*. Start at the foot of the arête. Climb the left edge stepping steeply over the first break and neatly over the next. Now follow the rib to a bold and delicate finish on small crimps.

★ **Scimitar Crack** 28m VS 4c (1980)

Start at a grassy bay under the short right-facing corner. Ascend the corner and the superb jamming crack in the wall above.

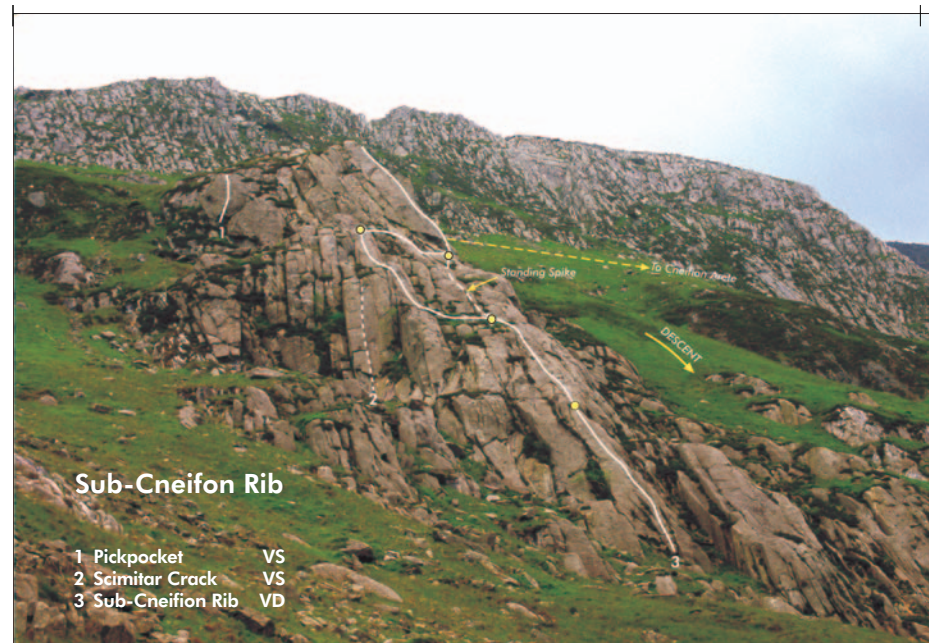
★ **Scimitar Wall** 28m E1 5b (8.9.96)

Start as for *Scimitar Crack*. Move right across the wall to a thin crack. Climb this via a downward-pointing flake to the top. Good climbing.

The Main Rib

The next route takes the rib in its entirety. It is one of the best of its grade in the area, one of the first to dry after rain, and far less busy than the Idwal Slabs routes. The climbing is technically enjoyable, on clean rock, with a splendid outlook in all directions. It is a classic rock climb in its own right, but can be used as an approach to the upper part of the cwm to link with *Cneifion Arête* in an ascent to the Glyder plateau to give a day with a real alpine feel.

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- 1 Pickpocket VS
- 2 Scimitar Crack VS
- 3 Sub-Cneifion Rib VD

Descent For those not continuing up the cwm, the scree and grass slope right of the rib can be descended to return to the start of the climb.

★ **Sub-Cneifion Rib** 160m VD (12.7.31)

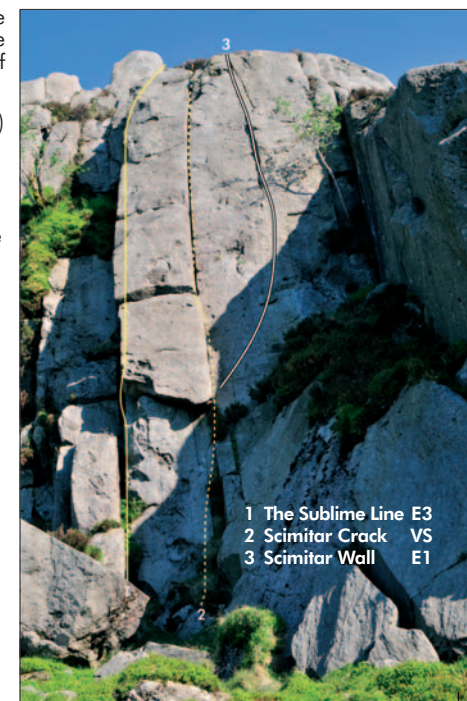
★ A pointed block at the foot of the rib marks the start of the climb.

1 45m Climb the grooves on the crest of the rib to a small crevasse ledge on the left; possible belay. Climb up to the bulge above and turn it from the left. Neat footwork up the shallow groove ahead leads to a good ledge.

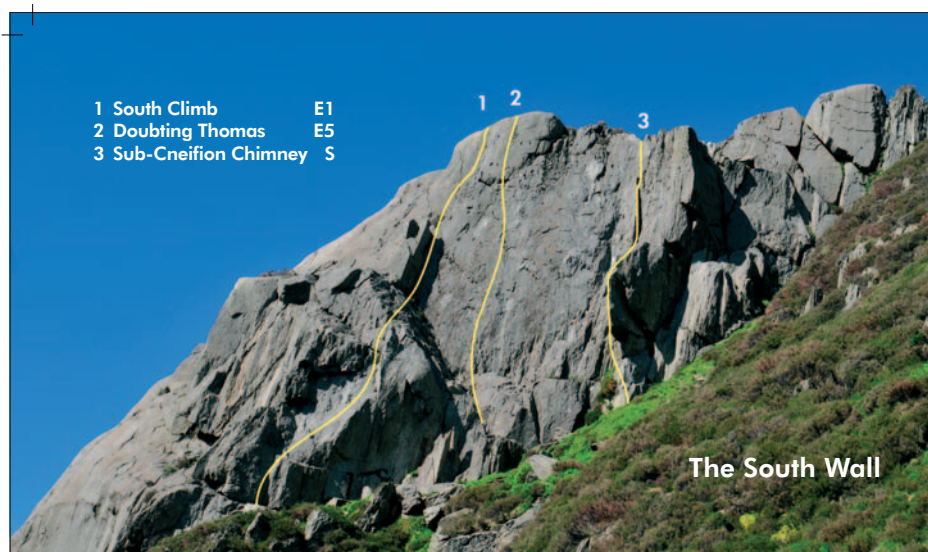
2 55m Either scramble up the heathery terraces above, passing a standing spike, to belay at the foot of the upper rib; or, much better, scramble across about 12 metres to the left-hand rib and climb this. Walk down to the right to the foot of the upper rib.

3 45m Climb up to the undercut nose that guards access to the enticing upper rib. Pull awkwardly onto a ledge on the right. Step up right, then swing back left onto the rib. Follow the shallow groove on the crest to a ledge.

4 15m Climb easily to the top of the rib.



- 1 The Sublime Line E3
- 2 Scimitar Crack VS
- 3 Scimitar Wall E1



- 1 South Climb E1
- 2 Doubting Thomas E5
- 3 Sub-Cneifion Chimney S

The South Wall

The South Wall

The upper part of the main rib has a steep south-facing wall on its right side. The smooth central part of the wall is bounded on its left by a rib and a nose with overhangs, and on its right by a narrow chimney with two jammed flakes.

South Climb 24m E1 5b (9.10.47)

Quite a testing little pitch. A sloping ledge low on the left gives access to a steep slab below the nose. Climb up and rightwards across the slab to a shallow groove. Move steeply up this to easier rock. Climb the corner formed by a rock finger leaning against the wall on the right, and finish via the upper groove.

Doubting Thomas 20m E5 6a (1995)

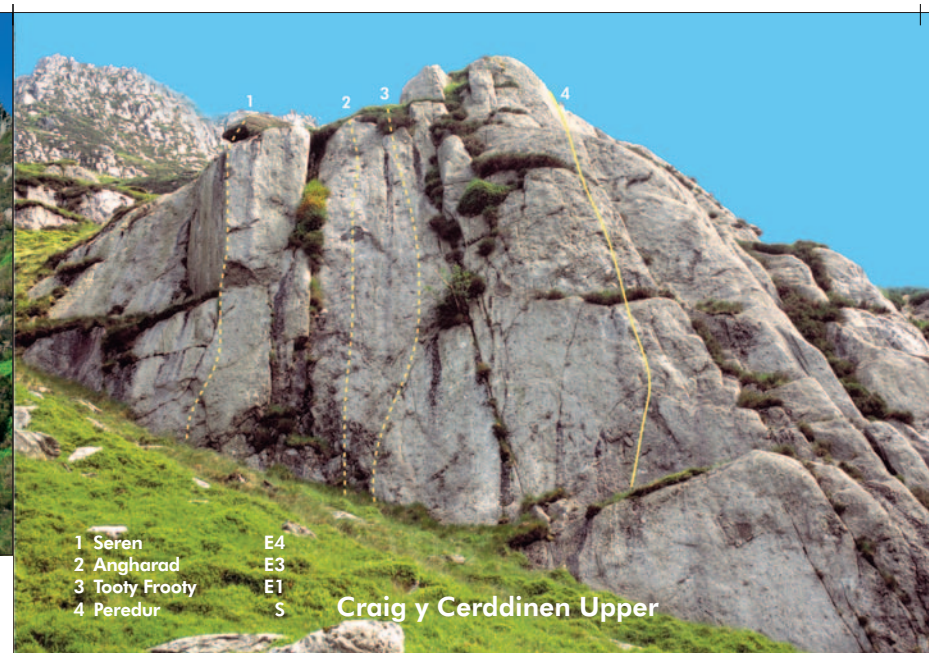
A good sustained climb on the central section of the wall, with small wires for protection. Ascend the snaking crack from the bottom left edge of the wall towards the centre of the wall, and a rounded finish.

Sub-Cneifion Chimney 20m S 4a (16.12.39)

The chimney is too narrow to enter, but the jammed flakes allow the outside to be climbed with good grace. Pass the lower one on its left; the upper one on its right.

Craig y Cerddinen Crag (of) the Rowan OS Ref 647591

Aspect	North-west.
Altitude	480 metres.
Approach Time	20–25 minutes.
Summer Sun	Afternoon and evening.
Winter Sun	No.
Drying	Reasonably quick drying.



- 1 Seren E4
- 2 Angharad E3
- 3 Tooty Frooty E1
- 4 Peredur S

Craig y Cerddinen Upper

This small crag lies about 100 metres down and right of the foot of the Sub-Cneifion Rib. It has two distinctly different parts. The upper facet is a triangle of rock with a vegetated groove running up the middle, and a struggling rowan. The slab left of the 'tree' has a couple of lines, and left again is a steep rounded arête with a block perched above:

Seren 12m E4 6a † (1997)

The arête. Start from a ledge on the left, or, better, by climbing the slab. Climb the arête by cracks on the left and small holds on the right. Early runners leave you with an unprotected topout.

Right of the arête is a vegetated break. The next route climbs the slab just right of this.

Angharad 15m E3 6a (5.89)

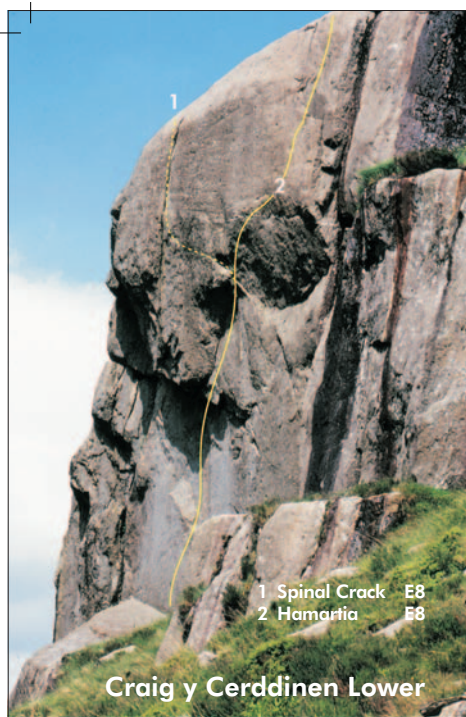
Start just right of the break and climb directly up the slab.

Tooty Frooty 15m E1 5b (5.89)

A delicate appetizer for the routes higher up the cwm. Start at the centre of the slab, left of the vegetated groove that supports the rowan. Climb easily at first to a flake down and left of the rowan. Reach up left to a peach of a pocket and continue on small holds to the top.

Peredur 20m S 4a (30.5.09)

Start on the grassy ledge right of *Tooty Frooty*. Climb to a small spike at 3 metres. The flaky wall ahead of the deep groove above leads to a finish up the nose. Belay well back.



1 Spinal Crack E8
2 Hamartia E8

Craig y Cerddinen Lower

The lower buttress is much steeper. Above a platform is an impressive west-facing wall of grey rock. A diagonal weakness leads up to an overhang in the middle of the wall, from which a thin leaning crack leads up to the left.

- ★ **Spinal Crack** 15m E8 6c (4.4.07)
The hanging crack is the main feature of the buttress but gaining it proves difficult and bold. The rock and the climbing are immaculate and the route packs in a lot for its modest size. The first part of the pitch is shared with *Hamartia*. Start in the centre of the wall. Climb up to the bulge then swing right to a small flake and recess, as for *Hamartia*. Using quartz edges above, stretch powerfully left to good finger locks in the crack, which is followed more easily to the top.
- ★ **Hamartia** 15m E8 6c (1999)
Start in the centre of the wall. Climb up to the bulge, and then swing right to a small flake and recess. Move up then diagonally right to the blunt arête. A hand-placed peg in a quartz pocket, and some marginal microwires are used for protection.

Lechau Cneifion Cneifion Slabs

The next two routes are in the recessed bay of ribs and wet slabs up and left of Suicide Wall and directly below *Cneifion Arête*; their starts are opposite to and just above the level of the Easy Way Off. The first route is on the steeper rounded rib to the left of the wet slabs with an overlap at about half height. Descent is down steep vegetated slopes well to the left of the rib.



Spinal Crack (E8)
Ioan Doyle DON SARGEANT

- Maen Chwyth** 60m HS (c.1993)
A surprising route on brilliant rock. Start at the base of the rounded rib.
1 30m Set off up and wander through some fantastic volcanic deposits and aerated pockets in the tuff to gain the overlap.
2 30m Tackle the overlap on the left and follow the rib above on continued good and interesting rock, easing off towards the top.

The wet slabs on the right dry out occasionally (it may help to find a local dragon). Although the climbing is fairly straightforward, protection is rather scarce, making it seem a bit harder. If wet, forget it.

- Crognant** 90m S (c.1993)
Good climbing on solid rock; some mud-filled pockets may yield protection in the future, but at the moment there is none worth mentioning. Start near the centre of the slabs at a slight rise or rib in the slab – the driest streak may be above.
1 45m The centre of the slabs are quite bold to say the least; do you stop to wheedle out some mud from a shallow pocket, or do you press on? Belay at a slight and rounded ledge.
2 45m Continue on up along the most probable-looking line, with not much more gear, to the top, and belay well back.

Cwm Cneifion

West Face of Y Gribin

Aspect	West.
Altitude	700 metres.
Approach Time	50–60 minutes to the foot of <i>Cneifion Arête</i> .
Summer Sun	Midday onwards.
Winter Sun	Early afternoon.
Drying	The ridges stand out from the hillside; the rock is clean, and dries quickly after rain.

The west-facing hillside above Sub-Cneifion Rib is a landscape of rock ribs and scree slopes. Various small crags are too broken to be of interest, but a series of longer rocky arêtes linking the cwm to the Gribin ridge offer the chance of some scrambling and mountaineering ascents in a wild environment; all the climbs lie above the 600-metre contour.

Approach As for Sub-Cneifion Rib, but then take the path up to the right of the rib to enter the upper cwm. A prominent fantail gully is seen about 100 metres above the path. Two impressive ridges contain the gully. The serrated blades of *Ghost Arête* are obvious on the left, and *Pinnacle Edge* takes the ridge on the right.

★ **Ghost Arête 76m D/SG3** (4.92)

A worthwhile scrambling ascent. Care is needed with some dubious flakes. Scramble up from the gully and start behind a large flake. Ascend the right-hand rib then cross over to a parallel rib on the left. Where the ribs merge, make an exposed move across a deep groove and swing out onto the next rib. Continue pleasantly up the steep rib, and finish more easily over the sharp fins of rock.

★ **Pinnacle Edge 72m VD** (20.12.36)

A good unpolished alternative to *Cneifion Arête*. Start in the gully next to the foot of the rib.

- 1 24m Scramble out of the gully and climb the series of short slabs just right of the edge. Move left after 4 metres onto a grassy ledge and continue to a good stance.
- 2 18m Climb up past a spike and continue just left of the edge to a flake belay.
- 3 30m Climb the slabs, taking a slightly harder cracked slab near the top. Continue up and into a stook of spikes. Beyond this the ridge joins the main body of the hillside. Descend via the gully on the left, or continue up to the Gribin ridge.

Beyond the next double scree shoot the most prominent ridge forces through to give:

★ **Cneifion Arête 140m D/SG3** (1905)

- ★ This well-trodden mountaineering line has all the qualities of a classic: unrivalled position high above Cwm Idwal, an atmosphere out of all proportion to its size, and the feel of an alpine ridge. The lower section is quite steep. Above this the upper ridge is enjoyable scrambling; exposed but with belays when required. Start at the foot of the arête, below a pinnacle up on the right. Climb over the pinnacle and up the wall on big holds to a ledge on the left. Take the chimney/crack above. The difficulties now ease, but there is plenty more exposed scrambling before the top is reached.

★ **Tower Rib 110m M/SG3** (25.10.36)

Higher up the cwm this ridge rises out of the chaos of scree and outcrops. An obvious tower marks the top end of the ridge. Start just left of the gully that defines the ridge on the right. Scramble easily for about 40 metres until the ridge steepens and narrows. The ascent now gains interest: a devious line snakes up the ridge, starting on the right and then weaving left only to go back right at the penultimate steep section, which is taken on the right edge. The summit of the final tower is reached quite easily on the right.

Clogwyn Du Ymhen y Glyder

Clogwyn Du Ymhen y Glyder Black Crag atop the Glyderau OS Ref 646 582

Aspect	North-east.
Altitude	900 metres.
Approach Time	80–90 minutes.
Summer Sun	In high summer the eastern side of the crag enjoys sunshine until early afternoon, so an early start pays dividends. The western side, taken by <i>Manx Wall</i> , loses the sun earlier. To enjoy Clogwyn Du at its best, wait for a spell of hot dry weather.
Winter Sun	No.
Drying	Clogwyn Du is slow to dry after prolonged wet weather. At least a week of dry weather is necessary after the winter months before a visit will be worthwhile, and after heavy summer rain, two or three dry days should be allowed.

One of the highest crags in Wales, Clogwyn Du offers quality climbing above the 900-metre contour. Standing about 400 metres north-east of the summit of Glyder Fawr, its steep undercut face dominates the headwall of the long cwm, with a magnificent outlook over the Carneddau, the peaks surrounding Cwm Idwal, and beyond towards Anglesey and the Irish Sea. The long approach won't appeal to roadside rock jocks, but some of Ogwen's best adventures are found here, and those who put in the effort will enjoy a memorable outing away from the crowds.



Cneifion Arête D/SG3

Approaches The simplest way is straight up Cwm Cneifion. A longer but more interesting approach is to take the Cwm Bochlywd path and branch out onto the Gribin Ridge. Follow this to the Glyder plateau then drop down the steep grassy slope just to the east of the crag to reach its foot, (as for the descent, below). Alternatively, a climb on Clogwyn Du can provide the culmination to a link-up of routes on the lower crags of Cwm Idwal or the Glyderau, to end the day on the Glyder summits.

Descent To return to the foot of the crag, the steep grassy slopes just to the left of the crag can be descended. The gullies further to the left are loose and cannot be recommended.

On the lower right side of the cliff is an obvious Y-gully, *Clogwyn Du Gully*, well known to winter climbers. Left of this is a buttress topped by the enormous Pillar, and left again, the towering main face; severely undercut

Cwm Cneifion

low down, and crossed high up by a band of beetling overhangs. *Manx Wall* finds an improbable way through these with sensational exposure. Further left, *Stratosphere* and *Hebenwi* circumvent the lower overhangs to find some superb climbing above. The prominent gully/groove slanting up from the left is taken by *Travesty*, after a devious approach from the left, below the steep ground climbed by *The Crack*.

The full name of **Clogwyn Du Ymhen y Glyder** was given by Edward Llwyd to the cliff c.1700 in order to distinguish it from other Clogwyn Duion or dark cliffs in the area. The rock of a Clogwyn Du would not have to be very dark, the term could be used just as correctly for a cliff often, if not always, in the shade.

The Crack 60m E1 (2pts aid) (15.6.69)

A fierce steep crack with a difficult entry, which is rather prone to damp, slimy conditions. Start at a large spike up to the left of *Travesty*.

- 1** 30m 5b Climb steeply up left and then right to join *Travesty*. Use a peg to get up to a small grass ledge on the left and then a sling on a spike to reach the crack. Climb the crack to the grass terrace.
- 2** 30m Go easily to the large ledge at the back wall. Climb the crack in the wall above, and the groove above that.

Travesty 85m E1 (4.7.43)

A bold route which tackles the slanting chimney/crack dominating the left side of the cliff. A direct approach is barred by overhangs, so more devious tactics are adopted. Start at the cave beneath the overhang.

- 1** 18m Take the parallel grooves to the left and belay in a luscious corner.
- 2** 15m 5b Gain a rock ledge, traverse right into a corner, and climb strenuously up to good spikes. Go down and round the overhanging nose to an old peg. Continue rightwards, in an airy position, to a niche; then move up and right to belay at the foot of the chimney.
- 3** 15m 4a Follow the chimney, which narrows to an overhanging crack. Belay in the bed of the chimney.
- 4** 37m Little more than an easy gully to finish.

Variation

- 3a** 27m 4b An alternative finish takes the broken wall left of the chimney.

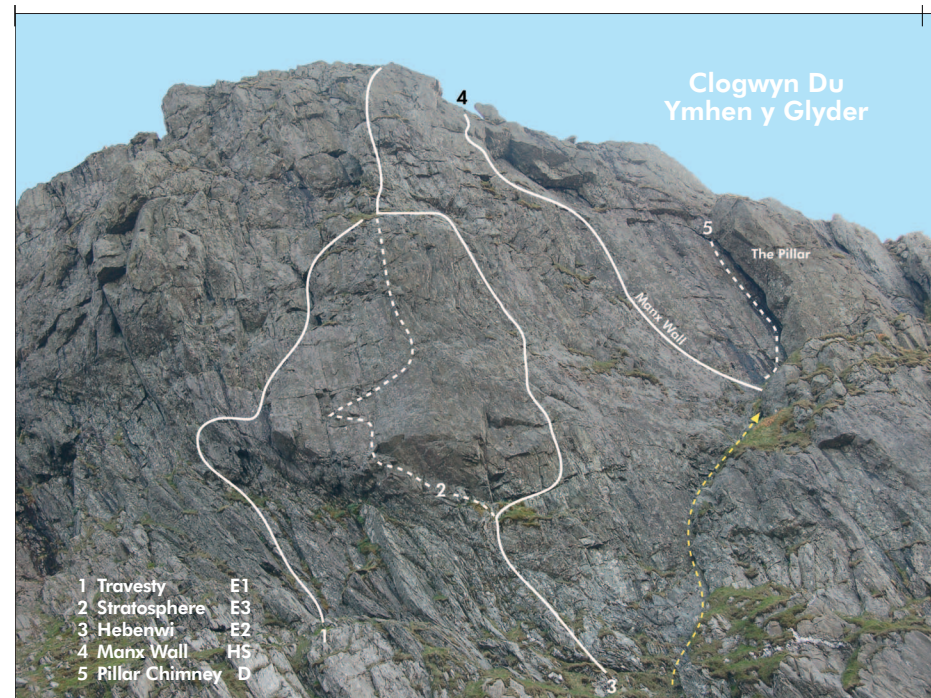
★ Stratosphere 95m E3 (5.6.82)

A terrific mountain route with great situations and plenty of exposure. Start as for *Hebenwi*.

- 1** 15m 5a Climb leftwards across the steep initial rock, and up to a narrow grass ledge. Thread belays on the right.
- 2** 25m 5c Ascend the undercut diagonal ramp on the left with increasing difficulty, until a gripping step across the void gains a good foothold on the lip of the overhang. Climb the wall above and traverse left to an impressive sentry box stance. A serious and absorbing pitch.
- 3** 40m 5b Make an exposed traverse right to a ledge on the arête. Follow the open groove above, and continue up the steep wall to a grass ledge. Another fine pitch.
- 4** 15m Climb the chimney to the top.

Variations

- 3a** The crack from the sentry box can be climbed to join *Travesty*.
4a The final arête of *Hebenwi* can be joined after pitch 3.
4b 18m 5a From the lowest grassy ledge take the wall just left of the chimney of *Travesty*, passing a small overhang on the left.



★ Hebenwi 80m E2 (11.10.69)

A thrilling climb which neatly sidesteps the lower band of overhangs, then forges up the middle of the main face. Start by scrambling up the grassy rake towards *Pillar Chimney* until it steepens.

- 1** 15m 5a Climb leftwards across the steep initial rock, and up to a narrow grass ledge. Thread belays on the right.
- 2** 28m 5b Move right to runners below the steepening wall. Bold strenuous moves bring better holds and a rest. Climb the thin crack above and move right to belay in a grassy bay below a shallow groove.
- 3** 13m 5a Climb the groove, surmount the block, and continue steeply to a tricky move onto the slab on the left. Follow the slab up left to belay below a steep arête.
- 4** 24m 4c Climb the arête, turn the overhang on the left, and go up a short chimney to the top.

Variation

- 4a** 30m 4b Traverse back to the slab, go round the corner, and climb directly to the top on splendid holds.

★ Manx Wall 55m HS (12.7.42)

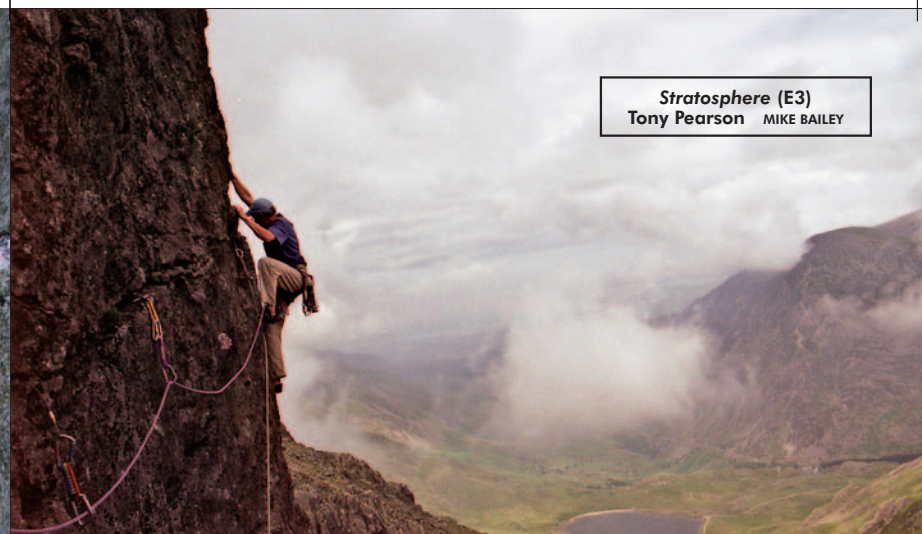
An outstanding route, one of the best of its standard in Snowdonia, with some superbly exposed climbing. It takes a leftward-trending line to break through the left end of the big overhangs high on the crag, and provides a classic finale to a link-up of climbs on the Cwm Idwal cliffs (early start recommended!). Start by scrambling up the grassy rake to a belay at the foot of the pillar (this takes in pitch 1 of *Pillar Chimney*).

- 1** 25m 4b Climb the leftward-slanting line of weakness to a ledge. Step up into the clean groove above and climb this to a good ledge and belays on the left.
- 2** 30m 4b Go up a short narrow corner and move left along a footledge to an exposed stance and possible belay. Climb up left to cracks below the overhang and get onto the ledge on the left. Gain the headwall above and climb the steep crack to the top.

Manx Wall (HS)
John Tunney DON SARGEANT



Stratosphere (E3)
Tony Pearson MIKE BAILEY



Chastity 100m HS (29.5.43)

A high-level traverse that continues the line of the last pitch of *Manx Wall* instead of breaking out to the top.

- 1 35m 4b As for *Manx Wall* to the exposed stance on pitch 2. Belay here.
- 2 12m 4b Climb delicately up left towards the small overhang, and make an exposed traverse left to a large block.
- 3 14m Descend the easy upper chimney of *Travesty*.
- 4 18m 4a Traverse out to a perched block and climb up left to reach the long grass rake. Spike belay.
- 5 21m Continue horizontally along the grass until a scoop provides the last bit of climbing to easy ground.

Pillar Chimney 54m D (1909)

An unusual route, about as different as possible from the previous very open ones, being an enclosed rift in the rock. Start at the grassy rake slanting up to the pillar.

- 1 15m Climb the rake to a loose landing in the rubble bed; then scramble up to the pillar.
- 2 18m Squeeze into the tight chimney and tunnel up to reach the top of the pillar. A superb viewpoint!
- 3 21m Descend 3 metres to the right and step onto the slab beyond. The difficulties soon disappear.

The Pillar Face (23m VD 23.5.50) starts from the ledge in front of the Pillar. Climb the left edge for 10 metres, traverse awkwardly to the middle of the face, and climb direct to the top.

Clogwyn Du Gully 91m S (1895)

Quite a good climb, though escapable at several points. Difficulties may depend on the quantity of water you are prepared to tolerate. Start at the obvious Y-gully on the right side of the cliff.

- 1 37m Go easily up the gully bed to the divide.
- 2 24m Take the crack to a ledge on the left wall. Climb a greasy slot, and then pass a difficult chockstone on the left to an easier part of the gully.
- 3 12m Continue up easy steps and a mossy chimney.
- 4 18m Go round the long rib on the left and climb a strenuous chimney/crack to the top. The original way is the natural gully bed on the right, but is undistinguished and disappointing.