

# Tony Moulam

## Climber who wrote intricate guides to the crags and rockfaces of Ogwen Valley in Snowdonia

Separated from Snowdon by a range of jagged peaks called the Glyders, and surrounded by steep rocks on three sides, there is a valley called Ogwen. At the end of the Second World War, this valley was, in the words of Tony Moulam, "the hub of the popular climbing world", and he wrote the guides to some of its most exhilarating climbs.

His guides covered the Glyders and the Carneddau, the mountain range to the other side of the Ogwen Valley, as well as the eastern approach of Snowdon and the rocks around Cwm Idwal, a hollow with a small glacial lake that sits in a tributary valley above Llyn (Lake) Ogwen. Having made first ascents of many of the region's crags, he had a phenomenal memory for their grooves and holds, and would write his guides with only its aid.

He had not taken notes while climbing since one cold day in the Glyders when "an icy gust whipped the exercise book from my frozen hands and hurled it off towards Llyn Ogwen. Luckily, by some freak, it soon changed direction and planed down, in a fine sweeping glide to the foot of the final rock step of the climb. I was then able to descend and retrieve it, but never again did I take such valuable original information onto the hills with me."

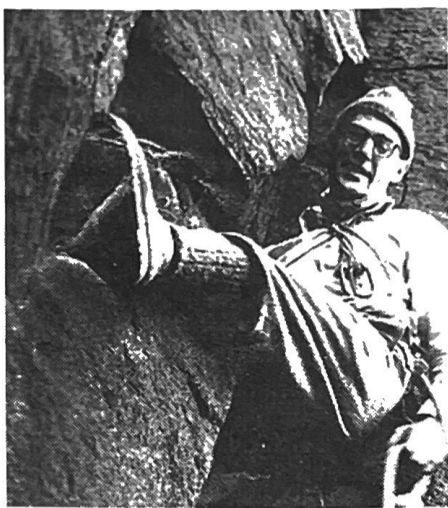
Anthony Moulam was born in Derby in 1927, the son of Albert, a repairer of clocks, and Mabel. A solitary child, he spent much of his adolescence cycling to the Peak District on the Claud Butler racing bike his parents had bought him for his 12th birthday. His parents suggested that he make lists of the flowers and birds he saw to keep his mind occupied, but he soon realised that scrambling up gritstone boulders was more exciting. He would spend his evenings writing notes on the routes he had climbed.

In the library of the Bemrose School in Derby, he would sit reading Colin Kirkus's book *Let's Go Climbing!* instead of revising. One day he was spotted in the act by a prefect, Peter Harding, who luckily for Moulam agreed with him that climbing was far more interesting than anything they could learn at school. Soon they were cycling into the Peak District together — Harding having surreptitiously placed a heavy climbing rope in Moulam's saddlebag.

Harding amazed Moulam when he levered himself up a rockface simply by jamming his hands into cracks up to his knuckles.

In June 1944 the teenaged Moulam volunteered for the army, but was not called up until the following summer. Having trained in the Malvern Hills, he was commissioned into the Royal Corps of Signals in Catterick, Yorkshire, where he set up a climbing club.

Demobbed in 1948, Moulam published his first climbing guidebook, to the Black Rocks in the Peak District, with Harding the following year. In the spring of 1949, he was hitchhiking to Snowdonia to go climbing with Harding when he was injured by a lorry. The boredom of his three months at the orthopaedic hospital in Oswestry was relieved when Harding sneaked into his ward and convinced him to go for a stiff-legged climb up Tryfan, a mountain above Ogwen. "This escapade was



**Moulam had a phenomenal memory for grooves and crags on his climbs**

soured when we got back to hospital," Moulam recalled. "I had to spend some time begging a dragon of a sister to find and make up a bed for me."

He enrolled at Manchester University that autumn to study electrical engineering, but climbing remained his priority. His focus on Snowdonia was, he said, due largely to the layout of the roads — had the Lake District been easier to get to, he might have gone there instead. In 1952, a year after graduating, he took a job at Imperial Chemical Industries.

It was, perhaps, his greatest regret that in the same year he turned down the chance to join an expedition to Cho Oyu, the sixth-highest mountain in the world. Had he proved himself on that expedition, the Joint Himalayan Committee might have invited him to join its Everest expedition the following year.

In 1954 he met Pauline Chapman in a pub in Keswick. They went climbing together, married two years later, and had two children: Clare, who worked in IT for the NHS; and Peter, who set up a catering business. Naturally, they were brought up to climb the hills too, although on rainy days they would often remain stubbornly in the car.

He and Pauline separated in 1984, though never divorced. The following year, having parked on double yellow lines, he managed to charm the traffic warden not only into not giving him a ticket, but also going for a drink with him; such was the beginning of his relationship with Anne Price that would last until her death in 2017.

Moulam climbed in the Alps, Scandinavia, Grand Teton national park and, in 1976, up Kilimanjaro. He also served as the president of the Climbers' Club from 1969 to 1972, and of the British Mountaineering Council in 1970.

Although in later life his health no longer allowed him to scale crags, he remained a regular hiker and kept extensive notes of his expeditions. He made his last entry in his walking diary in 2006. He would not talk much about his mountaineering achievements unless asked about them, but when he was asked, his eyes would light up.

**Tony Moulam, mountaineer, was born on June 29, 1927. He died on October 29, 2021, aged 94**

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