

WELSH JOURNEY.

W. LUMSDEN WALKER.

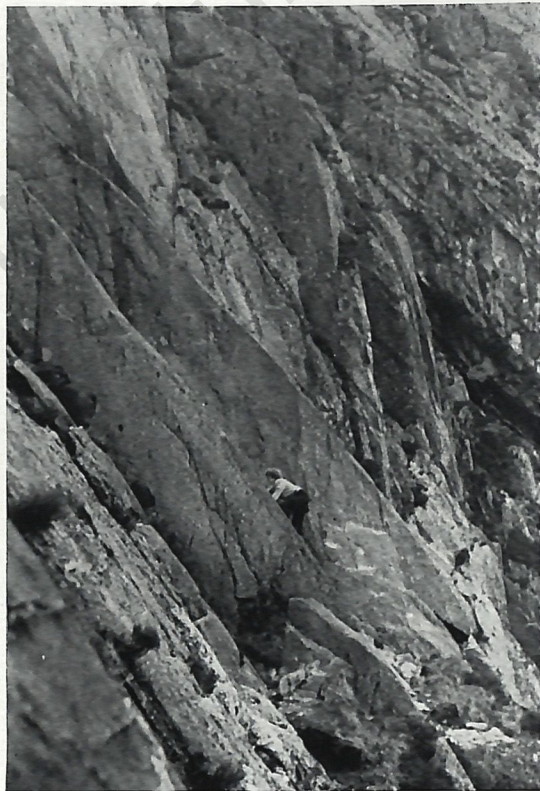
OF our journey to Wales, I need say little. Hendry arrived in Birmingham, direct from Glencoe, to schedule, and we caught a train at 6.35 A.M., an achievement of which we are both very proud! I have a dim memory of Hendry, enormous rucksack on his back, wedged inextricably in the doorway of a Birmingham workmen's tram at 6 A.M., quite unaffected by the wrath of those who had hoped to get on or off. I do recall that, thanks to my masterly organisation, the train was moving as we boarded it. With the swiftness common to all our cross-country trains in war-time, delayed by the inevitable change at Crewe, we reached Bangor and Wales at last.

Somehow the atmosphere of that day was first created by the bus which transported us to the hills—a bus belonging to the Bethesda Purple Motors. To our surprise, the Purple Motor landed us safely in Bethesda, and we set out to walk to our Youth Hostel at Idwal Cottage, some five miles along the road. A cold thin rain began to fall steadily. Yet another of our chilling trips had begun. We trudged steadily down the road. The April shower lived up to its name. The mist closed in on the hills on either side, and, from a slate quarry high above us on the hillside, we heard the singing of unseen Welsh quarrymen. Less aesthetically pleasing but more physically gratifying was the rumble of a lorry close behind us. Rapidly drooping under our packs, we looked mournfully over our shoulders and waved our thumbs in the appropriate gesture. The lorry stopped. It was, of course, full of coal-dust, and this happy chance, coupled with the fair wind and the rain, allowed us to look slightly less professional as we reached Idwal. It was long past noon and we did not seem to have eaten for years. We hurried to the Hostel, but alas, the disciplinarian Warden informed us that it was closed until 6 P.M. We could leave our packs in the shed. We thanked her feelingly, dropped



D. Thomas

CLOGWYN DU'R ARDDU



D. Thomas

IDWAL SLABS

our packs in what the pigs did not require of the shed and made tracks for a cafe along the road. Somewhat restored, we came out into the now pouring rain and decided that a short walk was all that was possible.

The Hostel is ideally situated for climbing. It is at the west end of Llyn Ogwen; to the east is Tryfan (3,010 feet) and to the south and west lie Glyder Fach (3,263 feet), Glyder Fawr (3,279 feet) and Y Garn (3,104 feet). The Hostel is almost due south of Bethesda, some five miles down the Nant Ffrancon Pass, a beautiful Pass lined by hills of 2,600 to 2,700 feet on its west side, the most southerly being Y Garn and Glyder Fawr, already noted. On the east side of the Pass lie Carnedd Llewellyn (3,484 feet) Carnedd Dafydd (3,426 feet), Craig Braich-ty-du (3,210 feet) and, farther east, Craig Yr Ysfa. This will be made clearer to the reader by a glance at the O.S. Map of Snowdonia. We had a week at our disposal and it was our intention to cover the main tops, hill walking, and to try to fit in some of the standard rock climbs as the maximum we could hope to achieve on a first, and short, visit.

We set out then, on this first evening up the stream beside the Hostel, leading up-hill to Llyn Idwal. This loch is fed by a stream coming out of the famed Devil's Kitchen at its south end, and near its east shore lie the famed Idwal Slabs on Glyder Fawr. There are few areas in Scotland so well routed as those in north Wales. The list of routes on the comparatively small mass of rock which comprises these slabs covers some 45 pages of the official guide. In the failing light and persistent rain they looked either dull on the easier routes, or unpleasant, and we returned to our Hostel.

The next morning we arose to find, as we had expected, that the rain was still falling ceaselessly. We returned to the Idwal Slabs. It remained cold and wet. Of the numerous routes on the slabs, there are three named Faith, Hope and Charity, graded difficult, and one of these we ascended. The log does not record which but I think it was Charity. The routes are all close together on a single slab of rock and parties may be found on almost all routes at the same time.

Rock climbing in Wales at holiday time (it was Easter) is a very communal sport, and I personally found this a rather unattractive feature. I have always regarded the solitude of the hills as one of their great attractions, but this is a purely personal complaint.

Leaving the slabs behind us, we descended along the shore of the lochan to its north end and into the Devil's Kitchen. Never has any corrie seemed to me more suitably named. Hendry and I gazed at it in great disfavour. We attempted a climb, but the mist was low and route finding found quite impossible. In deep gloom we descended to a cave in the rocks, ate our damp sandwiches, and forcibly expressed our opinion of the weather, the rocks, Wales, the Welsh, England, the English, and, once again, the weather. Our spirits somewhat improved by the stream of invective, we returned to the Hostel. From its door came forth the sound of hearty community singing.

We rose early next day and found, to our astonishment, that the rain had stopped. We ascended over the 3,000 feet col between Glyder Fach and Tryfan, descended to the Capel Curig-Llanberis road, which we followed to Pen-y-Pass. From here a track, known unromantically as the Pig Track, leads through beautiful country to the Glaslyn, a lovely lochan set in the horseshoe formed by Lliwedd, Snowdon, and Crib Goch. Standing at the lochan, one has the formidable and much-climbed cliffs of Lliwedd on the left and, in front, the cliffs of Snowdon, while Crib Goch, the summit of which gives a very interesting ridge walk, curves away to the right. We left the Pig Track at the Glaslyn and scrambled up the Snowdon cliffs, ascending a little south-east of the summit. Anti-climax came as from the beauty and solitude of the corrie below us we emerged into the horror of the summit Station Hotel (fortunately closed) and the railway line. By ascending a little and trying to forget the hotel in concentrating on the beauty of the view—from Anglesey and the sea on the west to the mountains we had left on the east—we found some solace. The ridge walk along Crib Goch further restored our spirits. This is an interesting ridge and some of the rocky pinnacles afforded

moderately good climbing. A very enjoyable day was happily ended by a neat piece of hitch-hiking to Capel Curig; tea, and finally an evening walk along the beautiful Llyn Ogwen back to the Hostel. Someone has asked, at tea, if we had climbed on Everest. We decided to take this as a compliment, hoping it meant that we looked the sort of people who should have climbed on Everest.

On the next day we were due to leave the Hostel and transfer our base to a cottage nearer Bethesda. Having, as a final fatigue, polished all the brassware in the Hostel, with but little result, we set out for Tryfan. We ascended the Milestone Buttress, on very moderate rock. The only difficulty was in accustoming ourselves to the noise. A Commando Unit was training and was mortaring on the lochside below us. From the top of Tryfan we went over the tops of Glyder Fach, Glyder Fawr, and Y Garn, descending into the pass near our cottage. Tryfan, much photographed, is one of the few hills which involves at least scrambling to reach the summit. There is a great deal of very good climbing on it and it would be well worth a long visit. It has the great advantage, almost unknown in Scotland, of being near a road; the rock-work is not preceded by any hard slogging up hillsides.

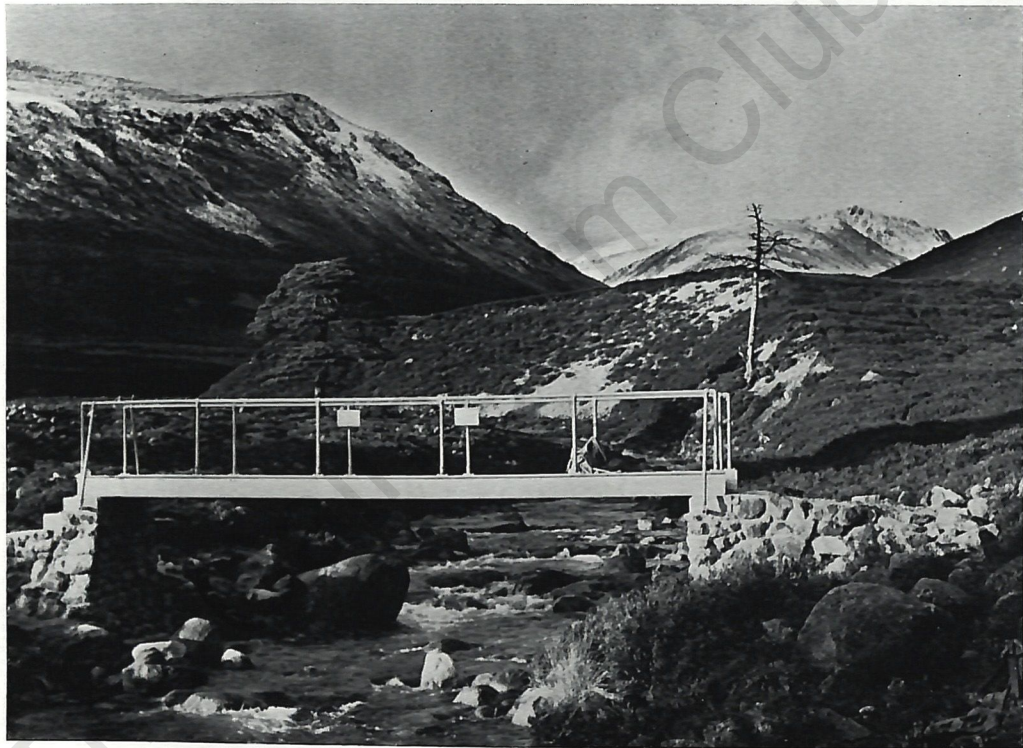
We shared our room in Miss Jones's cottage with another climber. Miss Jones, heavily booked, broke the news to us and asked whether we minded "the other gentleman?" Of course, we did not, but, to us, "the other gentleman" he remained from that time on. For our hospitality in that cottage we have the highest praise. We left at what we considered an early hour next morning and walked back along Llyn Ogwen. At the 11th milestone we left the road and struck roughly north to the Pen yr Helgi-du col and so into the east corrie of Craig yr Yfsa with the Amphitheatre Buttress. Here again, we found the usual overcrowding. A number of parties were climbing on the buttress and, as we ascended, we met another party of four coming down, one member of which, a young boy, was on a double rope. There seemed to be a great deal of rope about as we went through and for a time things became rather involved.

However, we successfully disentangled ourselves and completed the ascent. Once on top we continued peak bagging, over Craig yr Yfsa to Carnedd Llewellyn, Pen yr Oleu-wen, and Carnedd Dafydd. Our programme completed in magnificent weather, our minds sated by the continual beauty of the view and our bodies wearied by this series of Munroes, we descended to supper. One incident in the day caused slight confusion. Hendry suddenly said, "Oh, look, a kite!" Despite Hendry's efforts over many years, I am still no ornithologist. In vain I searched the skies for the brightly coloured, diamond shaped object I expected. Nothing but a bird was to be seen! I think it was at this point that Hendry finally decided that bird-watching—at least on the hills—was not within my powers.

We had now completed three very strenuous days, and the next day being Easter, we spent a quiet morning busily doing nothing. After lunch, we set out unenthusiastically to the west side of the glen and Elidr Fawr (3,029 feet). Progress was rather spasmodic but eventually we reached the top of Elidr Fawr and crossing Foel Goch (2,726 feet) continued on to Y Garn and so down to the road in beautiful evening sunshine. Here we revived and walked along a country road, singing patriotic Scottish songs rather aggressively in the peace of this Welsh evening. No hostility, however, was shown and we returned safely to the cottage and Miss Jones's excellent supper.

The next day was our last and we had to be in Bangor that evening. The weather, as if to reconcile us to leaving, had broken. Rain threatened and the wind was cold. We made for the nameless Cwm on the north-west face of Glyder Fach and ascended the Cneifon Ridge, of moderate standard, descended the pinnacle ridge and spent the rest of our time in the quite difficult climb called the Monolith Crack. Like many Welsh routes, it is a route on an isolated piece of rock and gets you nowhere. This finished our day and our week. We returned, packed our belongings, walked to Bethesda and, for the last time, caught the Purple Motor back to Bangor.

There is delightful climbing in north Wales. There



LUIBEG BRIDGE

G. A. Taylor

is wonderful hill walking on hills resembling rather those of south-west Scotland than the Cairngorms. They have more definite tops and sounder rock. The rock-work usually starts at, or near, a road, and this is a great joy. Against this is the disappointment, at least at holiday times, of having to share all climbs with so many other parties. Indeed, I have seen a queue for a route on Idwal Slabs. The popular rock faces are routed on every square foot and almost to an inch. But undeniably there is excellent climbing and both Hendry and I hope to go back. A final note to anyone who may wish to visit this country. For the rock work, there is a series of excellent guides, published by the Climbers' Club, in four volumes, covering Cwm Idwal, Tryfan, Glyder Fach, and Lliwedd. The 1 inch O.S. map of Snowdonia is excellent and compares with the beautiful map of the Cairngorms.

LUIBEG BRIDGE.

The lettering on the two tablets is as follows:—

LUIBEG BRIDGE

IN APPRECIATION OF THE SERVICES OF

JAMES A. PARKER

TO MOUNTAINEERING IN SCOTLAND.

Erected by

THE CAIRNGORM CLUB.

August 1948.

←Speyside.

Deeside.→

	Miles.		Miles.
Lairig Ghru		Derry Lodge	2
summit (2,733 feet)	6 $\frac{1}{4}$	Linn of Dee	6
Coylum Bridge	14	Inverey	8
Aviemore	16	Braemar	12 $\frac{1}{2}$