

taking a photograph of the others on the summit, but couldn't quite get them into the frame - and so I stepped back! I just bounced down over the volcanic rock, uninjured. Whatever fates had watched over me through all these years were still kind.

### NOT LONELINESS BUT SOLITUDE

There is in the mountains no loneliness, except  
 that which is carried to crag and cleft,  
 deep within the crevices of one's heart and mind,  
 and which the searching wind can never find.  
 No one is alone on peak or ridge,  
 above the valley, vexing midge,  
 with buzzard mates and calling sheep,  
 for here one learns what friends to keep;  
 and down the mountain slopes the burn  
 chatters with rocks on its downward turn.

There is in the mountains no loneliness, except  
 that secretly borne in a heart bereft,  
 and here no misty thoughts but certitude;  
 it is not loneliness but solitude  
 that enfolds the walker striding high,  
 and makes his innermost being sigh  
 to see the timeless, infinite scene  
 of furrowed, brow-like hills serene;  
 and here the whispering wind and laughing sun  
 are clearly heard and speak of fun.

There is in the mountains no loneliness, except  
 that hidden with a skill so deft,  
 for not all faces are openly exposed,  
 and there are those with darker thoughts enclosed.  
 But even when inner thoughts are clouded,  
 here too one's soul ends peace enshrouded,  
 for though in solitary paths one walks,  
 one is not lonely when nature talks;  
 and here stones tell of distant days  
 while grass proclaims remembered ways.

George Philip

*The poet's daughter Sandra is a Club member*