

milestone near the start of the road to mountain enjoyment. We cannot deny him that.

Historical mountain, fettered giant, Mont Ventoux still dominates the Provençal landscape, its windy, misty, often freezing summit a different world from the sun-drenched lands below. Here in this short vertical span lies the whole fascinating range of mountain experience.

Dougal Haston – a tribute¹

J. Marshall, C. J. S. Bonington and D. Scott

Born: 1940, Duncan MacSporran Haston. Son of a baker.

Place: Currie, Midlothian, Scotland.

Died: 17 January 1977.

Place: Above the Swiss village of Leysin and below a minor peak called Riondaz.

Accident: There was a steep open gully through the trees on the back of the Riondaz, one of the limestone peaks immediately behind Dougal Haston's home in Leysin. It had always been his ambition to ski it but there had never been a big enough buildup of powder snow. In 1977 there was. He climbed a ridge leading to the summit of the Riondaz on 17 January, on skins, and then started down, cutting the deep unspoilt powder in a few tight, neat curves; then the surface broke and he was swept away in a powder avalanche to be buried under 6ft of snow at the bottom.

One of the finest mountaineers that Britain has ever produced was dead.

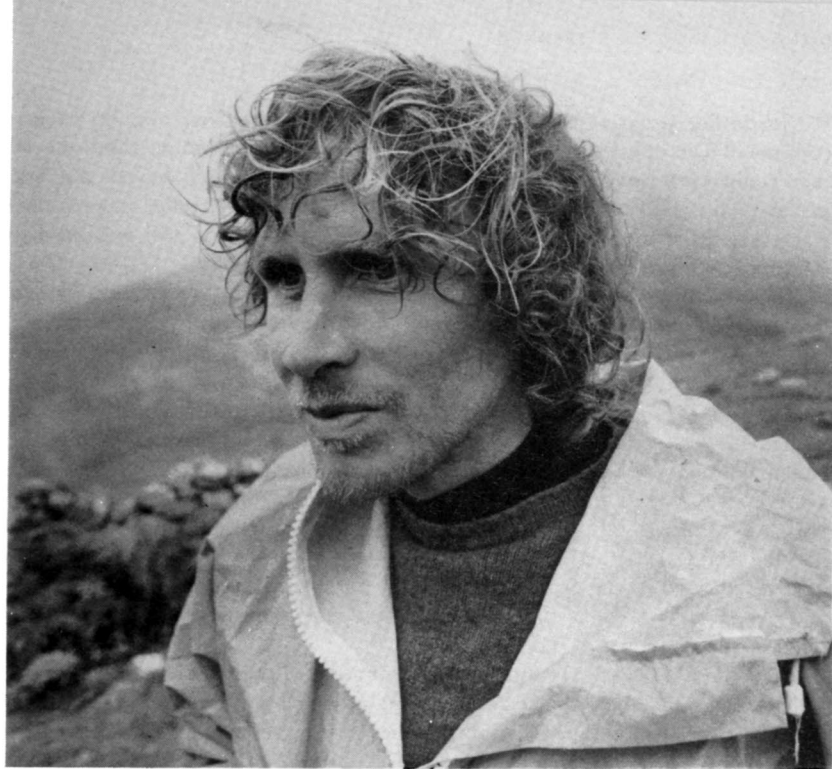
J. Marshall recalls:

Generalizations can be misleading but it is probably safe to state that Scottish Mountaineering wallowed in mediocrity, from the demise of Harold Raeburn into the 1950s, the dynamic Creag Dhu MC being a notable exception.

Thereafter, awareness of the great potential of Scottish mountains dawned upon the new climbing fraternity and fine ascents increased in frequency and quality as the decade progressed. It was into this fertile ambience Dougal arrived as a vital member of a small but auspicious body of talent, unique in the history of Edinburgh's mountaineering society, their arrival preceded a few years by the brilliant individualist Smith whose technical ability and emphatic approach to mountains set a glorious example for them to emulate or better if possible.

With so much unclimbed rock and ice about the explosion of talent was a heaven (or hell!) sent gift. By nature 'on the wild side' all I had to do was point the way to topple standard barriers and they were off. Smith needed no assistance, he was self-sufficient and indeed set the pace for the 'Currie boys' to follow, yet through it all he retained some vestige of respect for the establishment. By contrast the boys, ably led by Dougal, set out to test by transgression, every canon prevailing in climbing society. One amusing incident of this period being the week Dougal and Ronnie followed up a Lagangarbh work-party, to cover their newly painted 'lavatory green' walls with brilliant mind-blowing murals, reminiscent of Kandinsky; ostensibly in a vain attempt to counter the external Glencoe gloom!

¹ Portions of this compilation have already appeared elsewhere; inclusion here is gratefully acknowledged—Editor.



52 Dougal Haston (Photo: D. Scott collection)

Despite high life and hooliganism this was a period of great activity when Haston developed his skills on the local rocks, became inured to winter hardships and accounted for most of the hard routes prevailing in Scotland at that time. In this respect he was not exceptional as there were at least a dozen like him between the CDMC and Edinburgh Clubs among whom very close associations developed, albeit in friendly rivalry to make the most of the fine routes available.

By early 1959 Dougal emerged as a mature climber of considerable experience and ability with a number of fine new routes to his credit and it seemed fitting he should then extend his reference to the Alps.

As a party of five, Haston, Moriarty, McLean, Marshall R and I went to the Dolomites. It seemed important not to dissipate their enthusiasm in the traditional graduation process, so other than an introduction to the airy qualities of the Dolomites by a traverse of the Vajolet Towers it was straight on to the Sesto Grados.

Marmolada's south pillar was the perfect introduction, the climbing was superb, toasted by sunlight, doused in soaking chimneys and bombarded by icicles; only to find the notorious chockstone pitch covered in ice; we would have managed that all right but the ice was under a waterfall! The retreat was epic, surprisingly enjoyable and, dare I say it, effectively executed but they were all shattered, exhausted and starved, so it was back down to our woodland bower to recover.

As the only one of the lads stubborn enough to fight physical distress the following morning, Dougal joined me to retrieve a jammed rope from the pillar.

We made fast progress collected the offending rope then by common consent continued. The upper pitches appeared drier; I thought we would climb the ice, then Dougal just folded on a difficult wall on the way. Absolutely burned out, only his incredible will had kept him going and as we once more retreated down the wall I was acutely aware that on physical maturity Dougal's iron will and ultimate stamina would produce an outstanding mountaineer.

The holiday continued on to the Tre Cime with the balm of successful ascents of the Yellow Edge and the Comice route on the Cime Grande, then further frustration by failures on the Torre Valgrande (Civetta), followed by an efficient ascent of the Livanos route on the Cime Su Alto. Their descent was an epic, the result of my personal policy of supplying limited information, sufficient only to indicate the way, not to deny the development of acute mountaineering abilities. The Dolomites palled, so mentally hardened the party moved to Mont Blanc, where all that was achieved was a sense of frustration at missing the Walker in a crossing from the Torino to Montanvert in a storm which blotted out the big routes for the rest of the season. Alpine experience broadened Dougal's horizons, launching him on a career dedicated to the exploration of high mountains and self, for he had discovered an environment to test the yet undefined limits of his physical and intellectual capabilities.

In the ensuing years, Haston and Smith dominated the Scottish climbing scene, generating a whole new impetus of hard climbs and climbers, made cohesive by an incredible social life of unwholesome parties, battles with police or less desirable members of society, in and around the SMC clubrooms in Edinburgh. From a very early age, Dougal and 'blood brother' Elly were prodigious boozers, dedicated to a philosophy of persistent resistance to all forms of authority and naturally this became the mode for the emergent climbers of that period. Smith was then killed in the Pamirs (1962) leaving Dougal undisputed king of Edinburgh's castle. However, he was already too introspective to make easy capital of such a situation and continued unchanged, bedding, climbing and boozing, all seemingly at twice the pace of any normal man.

He was already started on the road to professional mountaineering, having abandoned his academic career in philosophy, in favour of odd jobbing between Alpine seasons, then in 64/5 he ventured with Elly in the running of a mountaineering school, operated from Lagangarbh in Glencoe. The courses were somewhat comical, if not bizarre, apparently producing neurotics, drunks or extremely good climbers, but the whole episode terminated in disaster when Dougal, in a drunken driving incident, ran into and killed one of a party of young climbers, on the Clachaig road in Glencoe. This was the most deplorable event in Dougal's life, yet (without seeking to lessen the enormity of his deed) it could have befallen anyone, drunk or sober, in the conditions prevailing on the old Clachaig road that night. As the reigning climbers' Moloch, it was the worst possible deed to have perpetrated, consequently he harvested a great deal of recrimination and abuse, much worse than the statutory 60 days jail sentence consequent to the crime. Much emphasis has subsequently been laid upon this incident as contributing to or inducing a dramatic change of personality, but these submissions are nonsense. Dougal had already developed great introspective strengths and his rational powers of thought denied any such radical change of personality. He deeply regretted taking the young man's life, but on considered judgement during his incarceration, accepted the stigma and consequence of his actions, served his sentence then

resumed his former life-style to the exclusion only thereafter of driving!

During these 5 years, Dougal contributed a substantial number of fine new routes but sadly, his obsession for the Alps progressively diminished these activities until his association with John Harlin ultimately withdrew him completely from the Scottish scene other than occasional visits to renew old acquaintanceships.

I always figured Dougal would live on into old age, founded on the knowledge of his powerful mountaineering and intellectual capabilities; a fanciful concept indeed for anyone habitually venturing into the mountaineer's hostile environment. That he died on a mundane ski journey into the hills must be the ultimate irony but doubtless, given time, he appreciated the whimsical twist in his parting.

Dougal's contribution to Scottish mountaineering in terms of routes and standards, was smaller than many of his contemporaries. His greater contribution was the 'shock therapy' destruction of old complacencies and the consequential flow of talented climbers in his following, which continues today and will continue well into the future.

His untimely death struck like the loss of a special young brother; though distant in time the bonds formed in battle with and against his incredible self remain fresh and strong to this day. Now denied the pleasure of parasitic, arm-chair following of Dougal's latest mountain venture, it will always be a joy to recall the vision of the youthful, volatile Haston, lithesome in stature, powerpacked in flaming unquenchable will.

C. J. S. Bonington remembers:

Dougal's place in the spectrum of mountaineering will always be as an outstanding mountaineer rather than a super rock or ice technician. He served his alpine apprenticeship in the Dolomites in 1959, not bad for an opening Alpine season.

1961 saw Dougal and Robin Smith on the Couzy Route on the N face of the Cima Ovest di Lavaredo. They were climbing rock in the Dolomites as difficult as that tackled by any other British party, but Dougal now began to turn towards the Western Alps, to the problems of ice and snow and rock, of high mountain weather and, inevitably, the N wall of the Eiger was on top of his list. In 1960 Dougal and Elly had looked at the face on their way back from the Dolomites, but were turned back below the Difficult Crack by a storm. He had planned to make another attempt with Robin Smith in 1962 but Robin's death in the Pamirs ended this plan. He then set out with another friend, Andy Whiteman, at the beginning of August, just after Don Whillans and I had made our attempt and had become involved in the rescue of Brian Nally. They reached the Flat Iron but were hit by a violent storm and were forced to retreat, ending with a near disastrous slip by Andy Whiteman below the Difficult Crack, when he broke his ankle. He and Dougal had been cheated of the first British ascent of the N wall of the Eiger. Dougal returned in 1963 with Rusty Baillie, completing the ascent in heavily iced conditions.

It was in 1964 that Dougal first met John Harlin. They made an attempt on the Shroud, to the side of the Walker Spur, that summer and then went on to the Eiger in the winter of 1965 to reconnoitre a direct ascent. The following year, through the winter of 1966, John Harlin, Dougal Haston and Layton Kor worked on the N wall direct of the Eiger, in competition with a German party of eight who were on it at the same time. Slowly the two teams began to co-operate until, with John Harlin's death, they merged. Four Germans and Dougal made an incredible push for the

summit through one of the most severe storms I have ever experienced in the Alps. It was in this armageddon that Dougal emerged as the outstanding, self-confident climber that was to mark everything he did subsequently. It also marked the start of my own friendship with him; I had withdrawn from Harlin's original team but had come back as the *Daily Telegraph* photographer, in the end climbing about two-thirds of the way up the face. I spent several days and nights bivouacking and climbing with Dougal, appreciating his quiet reserve and clear vision of what he wanted to do in life.

He took over John Harlin's International School of Mountaineering in 1967. That summer he met Annie. She and her friend Beth had trained together as nurses at Guy's Hospital and had gone to Switzerland to work at the Vagabond Club—a kind of free and easy youth hostel. Beth met and eventually married Mick Burke; Annie married Dougal.

In 1967 he made a bold winter ascent of the N face of the Matterhorn with Mick Burke and then went on his first overseas expedition—to Cerro Torre, with Burke, Boysen and Crew. They battled against the usual appalling weather and succeeded in getting to a very respectable height on this incredible rock-peak.

I next climbed with Dougal in the winter of 1968 when we set out to try the N face of the Droites and ended up with the N face of the Argentière as a consolation for unsettled weather.

And then followed the S face of Annapurna. Dougal climbed throughout with Don Whillans, learnt everything he could from the canny old master and in the process did most of the leading. Their final summit bid was a magnificent *tour de force*, snatching the summit in the teeth of the oncoming monsoon.

The international expedition to Everest followed. Once again Dougal quietly pushed himself to the limit, stayed out in front for most of the time and yet at the end of that unhappy expedition, when so much invective was flung around, no one had anything but praise for him. He had not entered any of the arguments and his single-minded drive to get the mountain climbed had somehow gone beyond petty ego. He emerged from the expedition with many new friendships and a great deal of respect from everyone who had been involved.

In the autumn of 1972, on our own attempt on Everest, I had used my group of 6 lead climbers solely for making the route, with the Sherpas doing all the carrying. I had paired Dougal and Hamish MacInnes together, intending to use them for the main summit bid. As a result I had held them back to ensure they were fresh for the final big push which, of course, never came.

In 1974 Dougal, Martin Boysen, Doug Scott and myself joined four Indian climbers to attempt Changabang. It was one of the happiest expeditions that any of us had ever been on, with 6 going to the summit together.

Dougal had sometimes been accused of being a prima donna. He certainly knew his worth as a climber, with a drive to be out in front equalled by few others I know. He also was utterly practical and unsentimental, believing in real economy of effort. If there were others to carry loads or cook meals he would leave them to do it, saving his own energies for the climb. On the other hand, in a small team where everyone's effort for load carrying, domestic chores or lead climbing was necessary, Dougal would do more than his share of all, showing himself to be a master cook and load carrier of considerable endurance.

On Everest in 1975, Dougal and Doug Scott forged a climbing partnership that tragically was so short, yet so vital. They are very different people. Doug,

undisciplined, warm-hearted and emotional, full of a vast restless energy; Dougal, cool, analytical and taciturn. Yet both had in common a huge appetite for hard climbing, an exceptional endurance and a love for the mountains. They formed a perfect team and the very ease and elegance of their final 2 days on Everest almost conceals the magnitude of their achievement. Nobody has ever put in two such hard days' work above 8400m as they did, in first running out a line of fixed rope across the summit ice-field, then making their summit bid and finally having the highest bivouac ever recorded. There have been several other bivouacs on Everest, all ending in more or less severe frost-bite. Doug and Dougal came through free from all but slight frost nip.

Dougal's last great climb was the alpine-style ascent of a new route on Mount McKinley, once again with Doug Scott. It was totally committing and beautifully executed.

We all had so many plans for the future, that we shall feel his absence sorely, both from friendship that has ripened in many good and hard experiences and from the sheer loss to a team of one of the most quietly determined, capable mountaineers that this country has ever produced.

D. Scott sums up:

During the afternoon of 18 January 1977 one reporter after another rang through for my comments—first on Dougal's disappearance then, on confirmation that he was dead, for my feelings about the accident. I mumbled inanities. Between calls my mind hurtled back over the mountains we had climbed and forwards to those projected for the future. It seemed impossible that he was gone. Get a grip, I told myself, and queried why it should upset me so—why was he that important?—and that's what I've been wondering ever since.

To me he was always Dougal of The Bat on Carn Dearg with Robin Smith. Of the Dolomites, again with Smith, on the Cima Ovest via the horrendous Swiss-Italian route in 1961. Of the Eiger N wall with Big Elly and later with Rusty Baillie in 1963. Of drunken driving and prison in 1965; of the Eiger Direct in 1966, of the International School of Mountaineering in Leysin, of winter ascents of the Matterhorn N face with Mick Burke in 1967; of Cerro Torre in Patagonia and Mount Watkins S face in Yosemite Valley during 1969; of Annapurna S face in 1970. Of Everest SW face in 1971 with an ill-starred cast—but here as elsewhere he emerged with his reputation untarnished, stronger than ever, for he had been the strong man.

During all this period he was to me a man tampering with the frontiers of existence—a man rarely seen; just a glimpse in a pub, in Glencoe, in Chamonix; a picture in a newspaper or on TV, as during the Old Man of Hoy carnival. He seemed hard, morose and aloof. He had become a cult figure—the sort that some men will hate but yet try to imitate, the sort girls gurggle over. Up until 1972, that was my impression of him.

In the autumn of 1972 Dougal was back on the SW face of Everest. He was actually climbing with Hamish MacInnes but I saw quite a lot of him, as a fellow-member of Bonington's team. In 1974 we climbed together for the first time on Changabang, and we continued to climb together—in 1975 on Everest, and in 1976 on Mount McKinley S face.

Thus over the last 4 years I had found myself increasingly in his company and perhaps because of the increasing severity of the climbs we did, I became ever more

aware of his attitudes to climbing and to parts of his life in general.

The excelsior urge in Dougal was, for one reason or another remarkably well developed. He was able to bend his will to maintaining upward progress through the most adverse conditions, when he was fully convinced of the logic of the route. He never faltered, never backed down, and took every pitch on a climb that came his way. He was helped in this because of his ability to acclimatize quickly, and by the vast reserves of strength he seemed to possess at the end of the day. He was an aristocrat amongst the rest, always economical in words and deeds but busy with his thoughts: processing the available data, determining the need for intervention or action. While the climbing went well he moved upwards quietly content. Only when bad organization, team frailties or hostile weather threatened would he add the weight of his opinion to the argument for forward momentum. His strength transmitted itself to those in his presence, and his physical and moral strength became their strength.

He had acquired the air of studied disinterest, and the means to hide deep-felt emotions, that the public schools are said to cultivate amongst their clients. This seemingly aloof manner could be disconcerting to the uninitiated but was in reality an unwillingness—as Graham Tiso put it—‘to suffer fools gladly’. In fact I always noticed that people in his company instinctively reacted to him positively, in that they were never inaccurate or flippant but considered what they said, and listened carefully to his opinion. In that way he definitely brought out the best in people.

He questioned the way climbing was heading, holding little brief for the paper pundits. He hated pettiness, especially in criticism. Of criticism he wrote: ‘These people who had not dared were now coming out of their holes to criticise’ (of the Eiger Direct route). ‘Was it envy? Insecurity? I’ll never know but it left a sad impression that people could be so petty.’ But still they emerge, these critics, even after his death. ‘He admitted he was a “primadonna” nursing his reserves of strength for the prestige-laden summit push while others burnt themselves out lugging oxygen and supplies to the high camps,’ wrote the *Sheffield Telegraph*. This was never the case in my experience with him.

In his autobiography Dougal gives the impression that his 1966 winter climb on the Eiger Direct was the turning point in his life: ‘I felt as if I had just come at last out of the darkness into the light, and the exploration of that light offered so many bewildering possibilities that my mind could scarcely cope with the contemplation of it all.’ In fact, from then on he dazzled the climbing world with his exploits over the next 10 years.

Arguably, however, it was not so much the Eiger that gave a new direction to his life as the tragic events of the Glencoe accident. The sense of guilt ran so deep he was quite unable to deal with the incident in his autobiography *In High Places*. It was something he rarely spoke about. After the Eiger climb Dougal became extremely morose, cryptic, elusive, hard-drinking and aggressive. It often seemed that he pushed himself so hard in the mountains in an attempt to purge himself of the guilt he felt.

But maybe these amateur depth probes into his make-up are wrong. Maybe he would have achieved as much without the accident. I am not qualified to write more except to add he seemed to be mellowing during the last year or so—since Everest. His manner was definitely more relaxed, more outgoing, as if the purging process had run its course. He was still the same sensitive, reticent Dougal, but now he seemed more tranquil. Perhaps it was just the aging process as with all of us, for

his metaphysical development had passed from rebellion into a period of spiritual confusion until finally he was able to celebrate an awareness and acceptance of all things. It was left to the rest of us to accept his passing.

Going back to 18 January, after a month's contemplation I now know why it was so important that he at least crossed my path, and why I was so sad at the news of his passing. How sad that it should be now, just as I was beginning to penetrate his shell and discover a wealth of human subtleties behind. How much easier it was with Dougal to step out into the frontier regions of the mountain world and play the 'winning game'.

The mountains remain the same. Nuptse, North Side remains the same cold, snowed-up face; K2 and all the others are still there. But now I shall not find them the medium they might have been, the means to explore me and him. That is what they surely are—a medium—for as Dougal wrote, they are also a place to find the limits of your own mental and physical endurance. But for him they were so much more. It was so obvious that he never really had to make the point that he simply enjoyed being amongst the wild places of the earth—walking, ski-ing, crag-climbing—mountaineering at any level just to be there. That, after all, is mainly why he chose to live amongst them.

Who will now remind me, in distant times, of Everest's snowy summit ridge that perfect autumn night, or of McKinley's icy wind-swept face? What have I left except coloured slides concentrating my thoughts into a stereotype, as my fickle memory fails and flashes of the past become less and less? But forever, I know, I'll always recall his happy smiling face lit up in the setting sun on the top of Everest.

And others too will have their own memories—people in Scotland and the rest of Britain, in Switzerland and North America. Dougal was a good and loyal friend, and they gave him the same loyalty in exchange. He remains a good memory in many heads.

Climbers' playgrounds — Europe

25 Climbing in the Franconian Jura in South Germany

Rudolf Buchner

(Translation: E. N. Bowman)

The Franconian Jura, with more than 3000 routes on approximately 700 rock faces, is one of the most fascinating climbing regions in the West German central mountain system. It forms a continuation of the Schwäbische Alb and extends N from the Nördlinger Ries and the Bavarian Danube Valley as far as the Staffelberg in the Main Valley.

It comprises 6 climbing centres which are as follows: the Weismainalb between Bamberg and Kulmbach; the Wiesentalb between Forchheim and Bayreuth; the Trubachalb near Gräfenberg; the Pegnitzalb between Hersbruck and Pegnitz; the Laaberalb between Neumarkt/Oberpfalz and Regensburg and the Altmühlalb between Eichstätt and Kelheim.

The rocks are composed of compact limestone and dolomite (White Jura) and attain a height of approximately 20 to 40m, but at the same time heights of from 40