

Starts and Ends

Well begun is half done. And well ended is – well – ended.

1 Ends

Climbing Orion Direct (Ben Nevis)

...However, for those who climb it, it will never lose any of its impact.

A truly great mountain day (Great Gable)

...It was the synthesis of what has always driven me to be an outdoor writer, and a delicious elation streamed through my veins.

Intake Ridge

... Satisfied at last, we dropped away from the rocks, collected patient collie Jess, tail windmilling in excitement, and headed home.

Running the Bob Graham Round

...Thank you to those who joined me on my adventure.

A walk with the gulls

...From the huge cairn at the summit, I, however, was able to spy out my destination, via the beautiful White Beach to the tail of roaks at Niarbyl and a cup of tea at the Manx National Heritage Café.

The Bowderdale Classic

They may not have the glamour of their Lake District neighbours but, when it comes to mountain bike adventures, the Howgills are second to none.

Magic among the howgills

With Langdale and Bowderdale on either hand and a rich panorama ahead to Cross Fell, we could have asked for no finer sights to end the day.

The Pennine Way

That's no longer the case, but the Pennine Way remains a firm favourite with me.

The Tissington Trail

Finally the Tissington Trail took us gently back to a refreshing ice cream – the perfect end to a thoroughly enjoyable ride!

The secret side of Snowdon

With yet more scrambling to descent the mountain's East Ridge, it was one of those perfect mountain days.

Hergest Ridge

...to celebrate one of the great walks of the Welsh borderlands in one of its great pubs, the intimate and historic Olde Tavern.

The Thames Path

The journey itself was both our achievement and our reward.

Starts and ends

1 Walking the Chestnut Way of South Tirol

Austrian Alpine Club (UK) newsletter (Michael Barnes)

In June 2024, a group of nine Sektion Britannia members (Kevin, Eimear, Steve, Nuala, Simon, Cathy, Mark, Sandra, Mike) walked a linear, nong-distanc trail called the Chestnut Way (Keschtnweg in German Tirolean dialect or Sentiero del Castagno in Italian), led by Kevin Thomas. The Chestnut Way is situated in the South Tirol (Südtirol). This area has an interesting history; in a treaty signed in September 1919 the German-speaking territory was annexed to Italy. Hence places now have two names – German and Italian.

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 - sentence simply repeating the main header
 - German name of the South Tirol
 - date including month of the signing of the treaty
 - another sentence about nomenclature
 - and the full names, interesting to those named and their friends, not to all the rest of the readers.
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5. Ending rich in non-specific adjectives: excellent, memorable, interesting, priceless moments, stunning.

6. And the full impact finale: a thank-you to Kevin, appreciated by Kevin, not relevant to the rest of us.

2 Too hot to Ramble

Trail magazine, Tom Bailey

They're seemingly happening more and more. Where once it would have been every decade, now it seems to be every year. I am, of course, talking about heatwaves. Though the mountains don't generally see the high temperatures of southern England, they do bake in their own way and in their own juices. This is both life affirming and life threatening for us walkers. As always in the mountains, successfully enjoying such conditions is a case of finding the way.

So there I was, June in the western Lake District...

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The drive home with windows open wide, pushing the car through that same thickness of air that the jets had struggled through, made me glad it isn't like this all the time. I even struggled to remember what the Lake District fells were like in the rain. Maybe I'd been out in the sun for too long!

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Kev Reynolds

Perched on the lip of a glacier gorge on the eastern side of the Bernese Alps, the privately owned Burg Hut is one of my all-time favourites. I was there one summer with my daughter. I'd already spent three weeks on my own, finalising research for a guide to the Silvretta and Rätikon Alps, and still had a fortnight left to check a few routes for another book, so Claudie had decided the old man could do so with some company.

We hiked up from Fiesch...

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... from where we could look across the unseen Massa gorge to the lights of Belalp, our next destination. But Belalp could wait. This was perfection, and all we needed for now.

4 Affric

In all this earth does there live a satisfied climber? It is not possible. If satisfied he would not climb. My winter season of 1945–6, for example...

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So that I am still not a satisfied climber—and know that I never will be. Life is short, the mountain infinitely high, but the route goes.

Start: 4. philosophical assertion

End: 6. repeating the hook (no twist)

5 Bovski Gamsovec – a ‘lesser’ gem

Roy Clark & Justi Carey

Most walkers and climbers who trek up the Vrata Valley on their first trip to the area will usually be heading for Triglav, the highest of the Julian Alps. This means, of course, that peaks of lesser height and fame are ignored or overlooked, regardless of their own unique character. I’d done it myself – I ‘bagged’ Triglav on my first Julian Alps trip, for whatever reason, be it understandable prioritising or egocentric illogical choice.

This time, though...

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It may seem that Bovski Gamsovec was created solely for the purpose of admiring its loftier neighbour, Triglav, but that would be an injustice to a smaller mountain of immeasurable qualities.

Prologue

Jonathan Williams

We are sitting outside the Cabane du Mont-Fort high above Verbier, looking out at the sunset over the Combin range with Mont Blanc behind. Dinner is coming soon and the trekkers’ thoughts have moved on from today’s grinding 1650m climb to tomorrow’s route over the wild and remote Grand Désert. The question goes out: ‘What does Kev say?’ and half a dozen copies of the little blue guidebook appear...

6 Walk on the Wild Side

Phoebe Smith

‘The stripper’s arrived!’

It’s not a phrase you would imagine hearing on entering one of Scotland’s mountain huts – especially one as remote as Glencoul in the north-west Highlands. But as I approached the green door of this little bothy, after struggling through a particularly difficult river crossing, this was the cry that greeted me.

...

One of them asked me again which bothy experience had been the best. I smiled and said, ‘the one where I ended up joining a stag party and spending the evening with some of the dearest people I could have ever hoped to meet.’

Glencoul photos, Alison Young.

2nd para. Exercise: improve it!

Available info.

Small, remote Glencoul bothy, North-west Highlands.

Green door. (It’s on the shore of a sea loch, was formerly a schoolteacher’s house for remote community now departed, surrounded by mountains with no view of the open sea.)

Has just had a difficult river crossing.

Stag party.

(The piece is going to be about the pleasures and perhaps pains of bothying. Not all info needs to be included. Make up any additional details you think should be in there.)

'The stripper's arrived!'

The mountain hut at Glencoul sits at the edge of a sea loch in the North-west Highlands, surrounded by high and craggy mountains. To get to it I'd walked for a full day, and struggled through a difficult river crossing. I hadn't expected to find anyone else already there ahead of me.

But, clearly, they had been expecting me...

Getting started, finishing off

1. Start at the beginning continue to the middle and end at the end.
 - Can work if the start is 'confronting the challenge'.
 - Can work if start point is a mental health issue.
2. Start in the middle, most exciting point. Perhaps a choice point. Flashback to start, then continue to end.
 - Traditional, widely used because it works.
3. Direct speech.
4. A hook. Some philosophical point, paradox or joke
5. irrelevant or apparently irrelevant theme or issue.

Ends

1. What a nice day we had
 - 1a. direct speech 'what a nice day we had!'
2. we had a glass of BEER (naughty!) or COFFEE. But not tea, tea is tame. Do remember to include 'well-earned', ideally with the hyphen as pedants insist that 'well' and adverbs in -ly should never be hyphenated and it's good to tease the pedants.
3. Thanking the walk organiser.
4. A quiet, contemplative passage, sunset over the sea.
5. Just stop at the end of the interesting bit, with a glance forward to all the wonderful stuff still ahead.
6. Return to the hook – now better understood.
 - ideally with a clever twist or joke!
7. Aphorism encapsulating the philosophic start.

More examples

7 The First Day on Buachaille

Three years in central European prison camps. Release, April 1945.

During the fine weather of May I was unable to climb. At first if I walked for more than ten minutes I felt faint, and so felt no desire of mounains. My love of them was platonic, requiring of the body no act of outer expression. Four weeks later a first instalment of accumulating energy began to clamour for employment. My last climb in 1941 had been the Buachaille Etive Mor, and my first now could be no other.

...

‘The one thing that matters among mountains,’ said Mackenzie, looking out to blue and receding hill-ranks in the north-west, ‘is that we enjoy them.’
Simple words. Greatly overlooked. They embody the whole secret of successful mountaineering.

Start: 1. At the beginning

End: 1a. Direct speech

8 Yosemite day

As the morning sun crested the peaks, casting a golden glow across the side of Half Dome, the air felt crisp and alive with promise. Each step along the rocky trail was a reminder of nature’s quiet strength, the path winding upward into a world of towering pines and distant ridges. Birds called from unseen perches, and the scent of pine mixed with the earth, grounding me in the present moment—a journey of both body and spirit.

...

At the summit, standing above the clouds, I felt a deep connection to the world below, a sense of clarity and peace. This hike was more than a climb; it was renewal.

Start: 1. At the beginning

End: 4. Contemplative. (5. end of interesting bit.) (1 what a nice day we had)

9 The traverse of Liathach

On the afternoon of 7th January Edward Mortimer and I waded down Glen Torridon in Wester Ross towards the west end of Liathach. New snow blocked the road.... [so they’re walking in along the glen]

At the shores of Loch Torridon we overtook an old stalker going to Inver Alligin.

‘Good evening,’ I said as we drew level. ‘It’s been a bitter wind today.’

‘A good day to you,’ said he. ‘Yess, indeed, it has been a cold north wind. It will not be good for the hills,’ he added, eyeing our boots and axes, ‘unless it is that you are chust the hikers?’

‘We like the look of Liathach,’ I replied.

‘Liathach!’ exclaimed the old stalker enthusiastically. ‘Man, but there is no other mountain like her in the whole of Scotland! She is machestic!’

He turned to us sharply. ‘But you will not be thinking of climbing her? Not in the snowy weather?’

‘We thought of climbing it to-morrow,’ said Mortimer.

The old man was outraged. He shook his head. ‘She is not to be tampered with!’ he warned. ‘No indeed, she is not.’

...

We were silent over our mugs, each preoccupied for a while with his own thoughts about that tough, thirteen-hour job on Liathach. Our thoughts, it appeared, were short and simple.

'She iss machestic!' exclaimed Mortimer at last.

'But she iss not to be tampered with,' I added.

Start: 1. At the beginning.

delayed start: 3. direct speech

End: 6. Return to the hook. (plus 1. Nice day, 2. cup of tea, and 1a direct speech.)

10 Glen Sligachan

In 1973, in persistent rainfall, I perched beside the lapping waters of Loch na Creitheach in Glen Sligachan on Skye eating a tin of mandarin oranges. It was bliss, yet bizarre, a moment filled with the contentment that comes from knowing you're doing something a bit eccentric, but which adds to life's experience.

...

We talked of continuing to Elgol, as many do, but the glen was what the day had been all about. Elgol would have been one brushstroke to many on this particular canvas.

Start: 2. in the middle

End: 0. no real ending

2 phrases to drop from opening?

"in Glen Sligachan on Skye'

'but which adds to life's experience.'

11 Loch Enoch

The Southern Uplands. Over 100 separate summits. Hart fell, with its Beeftub hollow and the grassy swoop of Saddle Yoke. White Coomb, with its Grey Mare's waterfall. Distant Cheviot with its Hen Hole. Mighty Merrick, with its fabled view (on a very, very clear day) of Snowdon beyond the Isle of Man.

And yet in all this 200km of hill range, stretching coast to coast, the one walk to keep coming back to isn't a summit at all. It's Loch Enoch.

...

... Two barnacle geese had found it the perfect pause on their migratory flight northwards.

Loch Enoch. It's the motorway pull-off on the way to Spitzbergen.

Start: 5. irrelevant

End: 4. contemplative . (5. end of interesting bit.)

12 The Line between Stubbornness and risk

'The Mountains are Calling' on Substack

We sat at the junction of what could be and what was, a familiar place to all of us. To continue on meant days of downpours, cold temperatures, steep passes with thunderstorms threatening. To head in the other direction meant safety, warmth, good cookies from the organic grocery store, and also giving up a dream we had planned for all summer.

...

This summer of fire and rain taught me some lessons. To be flexible, to go with the wave train if you are in the rapids. Bring a ground cover in a wet environment. Bring friends who will laugh and have fun even as you huddle in your tent for 12 hours. Having a foodie along can garner you some good opportunities for hitting real grocery stores if you live in a culinary desert. And that you must always evaluate that line between stubbornness and risk. It's not a set thing; it keeps evolving with every trip.

Start: 2. in the middle. (Choice point).

End: 7. philosophical summary

14 Upper Eskdale

I could have written about almost a hundred hilltop bivvies: nights on soft heather, warm in an eiderdown bag, while the stars make great circles over my nose and daylight creeps up behind some interesting scenery such as Cornwall or the Cairngorms.

But Adventure is when you don't know how it's going to turn out – and it actually turns out nasty.

...

There's very little insulation in four inches of overnight snow. But do you really know Upper Eskdale until you've woken up there, half frozen, in slush and low cloud, and tried to eat some muesli?

Start: 5. irrelevant

End: 6. back to hook, with joke. (5. end of interesting bit.)

13 Avalanche awareness

In 2004 I made a decision to do some ice climbing under building cornices on Aonach Mor. The cornice collapsed and triggered an avalanche above me. I had climbed about 30m and was placing anchors for a belay when the avalanche hit and carried me all the way back to the bottom of the route.

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RT rewrite: One day in 2004 I decided to do some ice climbing on Aonach Mor. I had climbed about 30 metres and was just placing anchors for a belay when the cornice above me collapsed, and triggered an avalanche. When the avalanche hit, it carried me all the way back to the bottom of the route. I broke my back, my pelvis, my ankle and some ribs.

(tell the story in the order it happened.)

The climbs will always be there: make sure you are, too.

Start: 1. At the beginning.

End: 7. aphorism

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Past tenses

Present: I climb

Historic present: I climb

when used to add immediacy when describing something actually in the past

Perfect: I have climbed

present looking back on the past

Past simple (preterite): I climbed

Imperfect: I was climbing

Pluperfect: I had climbed

Jane, where Joan had had 'had', had had 'had had'; 'had had' had had the teacher's approval.

The saddle

Sitting down while making progress along a route and taking in the views: this is one of the great joys of cycling. In fact, it is an often underestimated but largely essential element of the activity.

...

I finally descended to the car park by the River Wharfe with extremely weary legs and a much greater understanding of the essential role of saddles – the unsung heroes of the bicycle.

Start: 4. Hook. Philosophical point.

End: 6. Back to the hook.

Rainy lessons in the Dolomites

Forcella del Lago is where it all started to go wrong.

compare

Forcella del Lago, whose name translates as 'Little pass of the lake', is where it all started to go wrong.

A cosy old-style hut, it starred a belevolent cook/manager who dried us out, spread our wet gear around the kitchen and fed us plates of steaming polenta.

Start: 2. In the middle

End: 3. Well-earned glass of beer!

Struck by lightning

Dan Bailey

The first route I went out to research for my guidebook on Scotland's mountain ridges might have been my last. All true adventures involve the unexpected, it's been said. We could certainly never have anticipated what was about to happen.

...

The doctors were amazed at our luck. The current must have missed my heart by centimetres – it could have been so much worse.

Start: 3. hook.

End: 0. Just tails off...

Making a splash

I never did get the shot of Piz Buin I wanted. If a picture is worth a thousand words, the one I had in mind would have saved at least a couple of pages of text.

Piz Buin stands...

...

I never did get my classic shot of Piz Buin. Instead, I took a slice out of my arm and had an early bath. Fully clothed.

Start: 4. Hook. Philosophical point.

End: 6. Back to hook. plus joke

The Hills of Menteith

Liminal space is where you shouldn't be, you should just be passing through. Pedestrian subways. Shower rooms at motorway services. Midnight railway stations. Multi-story car parks. The Hills of Menteith. Such places cause unease and disquiet – but can also be a spur to creativity. Beyond the place you're coming from, on the verge of, quite literally, stepping forward into the new, such places are "on the thresh(-)old" as boundaries between the now and –

Hang on a mo. The Hills of Menteith?

...

"Once you know the source of your feelings about liminal spaces, you can better deal with the feeling when a place makes you a bit unsettled" – useful online therapy at betterhelp.com. I find that a half of Belhaven at the Forth Inn can help ease this therapeutic process.

Start: 5. Irrelevant

End: 6. Back to the hook.

Sierra Nevada

Ben Nevis by the North-east Buttress

No man will ever know Ben Nevis. No man ever has known Ben Nevis—not even the famous Clement Wragge, who made a daily ascent for eight months; not yet Dr Graham Macphee, who wrote the Nevis guide; certainly not I, who have climbed it only thirty-seven times.

...

No man will ever know Ben Nevis.

On the other hand Nevis will always help him to know himself. There is no end to such knowledge. Likewise there is no end to the joy of gaining it.

Start: 4. Hook. Philosophical point

End: 6. Back to the hook

Night and Morning in the Mountains

The most acutely difficult expedition to achieve on mountains in this country is a moonlight climb in winter.... I had been waiting seven years for a chance of traversing by moonlight the Aonach Eagach.

...

We found a patch of sun-baked turf (above the Glencoe road), on which we curled up side by side and slept. There kept running through my head, between waking and sleeping, a recently read verse:

Thou shouldst die as he dies

For whom none sheddeth tears;

Filling thine eyes

And fulfilling thine ears

With the brilliance... the bloom and the beauty ...

[It's from 'Atalanta in Calydon'. Swinburne.]

Start: 4. Hook. Philosophical point

End: 4. Contemplative

Autumn Dusk by Virginia Woolf

Now the sun had sunk. Sky and sea were indistinguishable. The waves breaking spread their white fans far out over the shore, sent white shadows into the recesses of sonorous caves and then rolled back sighing over the shingle.

The tree shook its branches and a scattering of leaves fell to the ground. There they settled with perfect composure on the precise spot where they would await

dissolution. Black and grey were shot into the garden from the broken vessel that had once held red light. Dark shadows blackened the tunnels between the stalks. The thrush was silent and the worm sucked itself back into its narrow hole. Now and again a whitened and hollow straw was blown from an old nest and fell into the dark grasses among the rotten apples. The light had faded from the tool-house wall and the adder's skin hung from the nail empty. All the colours in the room had overflowed their banks. The precise brush stroke was swollen and lop-sided; cupboards and chairs melted their brown masses into one huge obscurity. The height from floor to ceiling was hung with vast curtains of shaking darkness. The looking-glass was pale as the mouth of a cave shadowed by hanging creepers.

The substance had gone from the solidity of the hills. Travelling lights drove a plummy wedge among unseen and sunken roads, but no lights opened among the folded wings of the hills, and there was no sound save the cry of a bird seeking some lonelier tree. At the cliff's edge there was an equal murmur of air that had been brushed through forests, of water that had been cooled in a thousand glassy hollows of mid-ocean.

As if there were waves of darkness in the air, darkness moved on, covering houses, hills, trees, as waves of water wash round the sides of some sunken ship. Darkness washed down streets, eddying round single figures, engulfing them; blotting out couples clasped under the showery darkness of elm trees in full summer foliage. Darkness rolled its waves along grassy rides and over the wrinkled skin of the turf, enveloping the solitary thorn tree and the empty snail shells at its foot. Mounting higher, darkness blew along the bare upland slopes, and met the fretted and abraded pinnacles of the mountain where the snow lodges for ever on the hard rock even when the valleys are full of running streams and yellow vine leaves, and girls, sitting on verandahs, look up at the snow, shading their faces with their fans. Them, too, darkness covered.

First two sentences: word length.

Repetition 'white'. (And, last para, multiply of 'darkness'.)

End para 1: onomatopoeia

Shook, composure: personification

Timescale: forward (would await) and back (had once held)

Negative space, silent thrush, tunnels of darkness

Juxtaposition: whitened and hollow

First metaphor: colours overflowed banks; then room as picture

First simile: mirror as cave

Folded wings of the hills ie like sleeping birds

Scale: thorn tree and snail shell

metrical effects: lodges for ever on the hard rock vs valleys are full of running streams

Alliteration: substance – solidity. Perfect – precise .Full – foliage . Couples clasped.

Faces with their fans.

Word order, final sentence.

Sonnet 73 (Autumn)

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.

line 4 'finest line in all English poetry'.

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A truly great mountain day (Great Gable)

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... Satisfied at last, we dropped away from the rocks, collected patient collie Jess, tail windmilling in excitement, and headed home.

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It's not a phrase you would imagine hearing on entering one of Scotland's mountain huts – especially one as remote as Glencoul in the north-west Highlands. But as I approached the green door of this little bothy, after struggling through a particularly difficult river crossing, this was the cry that greeted me.

...

One of them asked me again which bothy experience had been the best. I smiled and said, 'the one where I ended up joining a stag party and spending the evening with some of the dearest people I could have ever hoped to meet.'

Glencoul photos, Alison Young.

2nd para. Exercise: improve it!

Available info.

Small, remote Glencoul bothy, North-west Highlands.

Green door. (It's on the shore of a sea loch, was formerly a schoolteacher's house for remote community now departed, surrounded by mountains with no view of the open sea.)

Has just had a difficult river crossing.

Stag party.

(The piece is going to be about the pleasures and perhaps pains of bothying. Not all info needs to be included. Make up any additional details you think should be in there.)

'The stripper's arrived!'

The mountain hut at Glencoul sits at the edge of a sea loch in the North-west Highlands, surrounded by high and craggy mountains. To get to it I'd walked for a full day, and struggled through a difficult river crossing. I hadn't expected to find anyone else already there ahead of me.

But, clearly, they had been expecting me...

Getting started, finishing off

1. Start at the beginning continue to the middle and end at the end.
 - Can work if the start is 'confronting the challenge'.
 - Can work if start point is a mental health issue.
2. Start in the middle, most exciting point. Perhaps a choice point. Flashback to start, then continue to end.
 - Traditional, widely used because it works.
3. Direct speech.
4. A hook. Some philosophical point, paradox or joke
5. irrelevant or apparently irrelevant theme or issue.

Ends

1. What a nice day we had
 - 1a. direct speech 'what a nice day we had!'
2. we had a glass of BEER (naughty!) or COFFEE. But not tea, tea is tame. Do remember to include 'well-earned', ideally with the hyphen as pedants insist that 'well' and adverbs in -ly should never be hyphenated and it's good to tease the pedants.
3. Thanking the walk organiser.
4. A quiet, contemplative passage, sunset over the sea.
5. Just stop at the end of the interesting bit, with a glance forward to all the wonderful stuff still ahead.
6. Return to the hook – now better understood.
 - ideally with a clever twist or joke!
7. Aphorism encapsulating the philosophic start.

More examples

7 The First Day on Buachaille

Three years in central European prison camps. Release, April 1945.

During the fine weather of May I was unable to climb. At first if I walked for more than ten minutes I felt faint, and so felt no desire of mountains. My love of them was platonic, requiring of the body no act of outer expression. Four weeks later a first instalment of accumulating energy began to clamour for employment. My last climb in 1941 had been the Buachaille Etive Mor, and my first now could be no other.

...

'The one thing that matters among mountains,' said Mackenzie, looking out to blue and receding hill-ranks in the north-west, 'is that we enjoy them.'

Simple words. Greatly overlooked. They embody the whole secret of successful mountaineering.

Start: 1. At the beginning

End: 1a. Direct speech

8 Yosemite day

As the morning sun crested the peaks, casting a golden glow across the side of Half Dome, the air felt crisp and alive with promise. Each step along the rocky trail was a reminder of nature's quiet strength, the path winding upward into a world of towering pines and distant ridges. Birds called from unseen perches, and the scent of pine mixed with the earth, grounding me in the present moment—a journey of both body and spirit.

...

At the summit, standing above the clouds, I felt a deep connection to the world below, a sense of clarity and peace. This hike was more than a climb; it was renewal.

Start: 1. At the beginning

End: 4. Contemplative. (5. end of interesting bit.) (1 what a nice day we had)

9 The traverse of Liathach

On the afternoon of 7th January Edward Mortimer and I waded down Glen Torridon in Wester Ross towards the west end of Liathach. New snow blocked the road.... [so they're walking in along the glen]

At the shores of Loch Torridon we overtook an old stalker going to Inver Alligin.

'Good evening,' I said as we drew level. 'It's been a bitter wind today.'

'A good day to you,' said he. 'Yes, indeed, it has been a cold north wind. It will not be good for the hills,' he added, eyeing our boots and axes, 'unless it is that you are chust the hikers?'

'We like the look of Liathach,' I replied.

‘Liathach!’ exclaimed the old stalker enthusiastically. ‘Man, but tehre iss no other mountain like her in the whole of Scotland! She iss machestic!’

He turned to us sharply. ‘But you will not be thinking of climbing her? Not in the snowy weather?’

‘We though of climbing it to-morrow,’ said Mortimer.

The old man was outraged. He shook his head. ‘She iss not to be tampered with!’ he warned. ‘No indeed, she iss not.’

...

We were silent over our mugs, each preoccupied for a while with his own thoughts about that tough, thirteen-hour job on Liathach. Our thoughts, it appeared, were short and simple.

‘She iss machestic!’ exclaimed Mortimer at last.

‘But she iss not to be tampered with,’ I added.

Start: 1. At the beginning.

delayed start: 3. direct speech

End: 6. Return to the hook. (plus 1. Nice day, 2. cup of tea, and 1a direct speech.)

10 Glen Sligachan

In 1973, in persistent rainfall, I perched beside the lapping waters of Loch na Creitheach in Glen Sligachan on Skye eating a tin of mandarin oranges. It was bliss, yet bizarre, a moment filled with the contentment that comes from knowing you’re doing something a bit eccentric, but which adds to life’s experience.

...

We talked of continuing to Elgol, as many do, but the glen was what the day had been all about. Elgol would have been one brushstroke to many on this particular canvas.

Start: 2. in the middle

End: 0. no real ending

2 phrases to drop from opening?

‘in Glen Sligachan on Skye’

‘but which adds to life’s experience.’

11 Loch Enoch

The Southern Uplands. Over 100 separate summits. Hart fell, with its Beeftub hollow and the grassy swoop of Saddle Yoke. White Coomb, with its Grey Mare’s waterfall. Distant Cheviot with its Hen Hole. Mighty Merrick, with its fabled view (on a very, very clear day) of Snowdon beyond the Isle of Man.

And yet in all this 200km of hill range, stretching coast to coast, the one walk to keep coming back to isn’t a summit at all. It’s Loch Enoch.

...

... Two barnacle geese had found it the perfect pause on their migratory flight northwards.

Loch Enoch. It's the motorway pull-off on the way to Spitzbergen.

Start: 5. irrelevant

End: 4. contemplative . (5. end of interesting bit.)

12 The Line between Stubbornness and risk

'The Mountains are Calling' on Substack

We sat at the junction of what could be and what was, a familiar place to all of us. To continue on meant days of downpours, cold temperatures, steep passes with thunderstorms threatening. To head in the other direction meant safety, warmth, good cookies from the organic grocery store, and also giving up a dream we had planned for all summer.

...

This summer of fire and rain taught me some lessons. To be flexible, to go with the wave train if you are in the rapids. Bring a ground cover in a wet environment. Bring friends who will laugh and have fun even as you huddle in your tent for 12 hours. Having a foodie along can garner you some good opportunities for hitting real grocery stores if you live in a culinary desert. And that you must always evaluate that line between stubbornness and risk. It's not a set thing; it keeps evolving with every trip.

Start: 2. in the middle. (Choice point).

End: 7. philosophical summary

14 Upper Eskdale

I could have written about almost a hundred hilltop bivvies: nights on soft heather, warm in an eiderdown bag, while the stars make great circles over my nose and daylight creeps up behind some interesting scenery such as Cornwall or the Cairngorms.

But Adventure is when you don't know how it's going to turn out – and it actually turns out nasty.

...

There's very little insulation in four inches of overnight snow. But do you really know Upper Eskdale until you've woken up there, half frozen, in slush and low cloud, and tried to eat some muesli?

Start: 5. irrelevant

End: 6. back to hook, with joke. (5. end of interesting bit.)

13 Avalanche awareness

In 2004 I made a decision to do some ice climbing under building cornices on Aonach Mor. The cornice collapsed and triggered an avalanche above me. I had climbed

about 30m and was placing anchors for a belay when the avalanche hit and carried me all the way back to the bottom of the route.

...

RT rewrite: One day in 2004 I decided to do some ice climbing on Aonach Mor. I had climbed about 30 metres and was just placing anchors for a belay when the cornice above me collapsed, and triggered an avalanche. When the avalanche hit, it carried me all the way back to the bottom of the route. I broke my back, my pelvis, my ankle and some ribs.

(tell the story in the order it happened.)

The climbs will always be there: make sure you are, too.

Start: 1. At the beginning.

End: 7. aphorism

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Past tenses

Present: I climb

Historic present: I climb

when used to add immediacy when describing something actually in the past

Perfect: I have climbed

present looking back on the past

Past simple (preterite): I climbed

Imperfect: I was climbing

Pluperfect: I had climbed

Jane, where Joan had had 'had', had had 'had had'; 'had had' had had the teacher's approval.

The saddle

Sitting down while making progress along a route and taking in the views: this is one of the great joys of cycling. In fact, it is an often underestimated but largely essential element of the activity.

...

I finally descended to the car park by the River Wharfe with extremely weary legs and a much greater understanding of the essential role of saddles – the unsung heroes of the bicycle.

Start: 4. Hook. Philosophical point.
End: 6. Back to the hook.

Rainy lessons in the Dolomites

Forcella del Lago is where it all started to go wrong.

compare

Forcella del Lago, whose name translates as 'Little pass of the lake', is where it all started to go wrong.

A cosy old-style hut, it starred a benevolent cook/manager who dried us out, spread our wet gear around the kitchen and fed us plates of steaming polenta.

Start: 2. In the middle

End: 3. Well-earned glass of beer!

Struck by lightning

Dan Bailey

The first route I went out to research for my guidebook on Scotland's mountain ridges might have been my last. All true adventures involve the unexpected, it's been said. We could certainly never have anticipated what was about to happen.

...

The doctors were amazed at our luck. The current must have missed my heart by centimetres – it could have been so much worse.

Start: 3. hook.

End: 0. Just tails off...

Making a splash

I never did get the shot of Piz Buin I wanted. If a picture is worth a thousand words, the one I had in mind would have saved at least a couple of pages of text.

Piz Buin stands...

...

I never did get my classic shot of Piz Buin. Instead, I took a slice out of my arm and had an early bath. Fully clothed.

Start: 4. Hook. Philosophical point.

End: 6. Back to hook. plus joke

The Hills of Menteith

Liminal space is where you shouldn't be, you should just be passing through.

Pedestrian subways. Shower rooms at motorway services. Midnight railway stations.

Multi-story car parks. The Hills of Menteith. Such places cause unease and disquiet – but can also be a spur to creativity. Beyond the place you're coming from, on the

verge of, quite literally, stepping forward into the new, such places are "on the thresh(-)old" as boundaries between the now and –

Hang on a mo. The Hills of Menteith?

...

"Once you know the source of your feelings about liminal spaces, you can better deal with the feeling when a place makes you a bit unsettled" – useful online therapy at betterhelp.com. I find that a half of Belhaven at the Forth Inn can help ease this therapeutic process.

Start: 5. Irrelevant

End: 6. Back to the hook.

Sierra Nevada

Ben Nevis by the North-east Buttress

No man will ever know Ben Nevis. No man ever has known Ben Nevis—not even the famous Clement Wragge, who made a daily ascent for eight months; not yet Dr Graham Macphee, who wrote the Nevis guide; certainly not I, who have climbed it only thirty-seven times.

...

No man will ever know Ben Nevis.

On the other hand Nevis will always help him to know himself. There is no end to such knowledge. Likewise there is no end to the joy of gaining it.

Start: 4. Hook. Philosophical point

End: 6. Back to the hook

Night and Morning in the Mountains

The most acutely difficult expedition to achieve on mountains in this country is a moonlight climb in winter.... I had been waiting seven years for a chance of traversing by moonlight the Aonach Eagach.

...

We found a patch of sun-baked turf (above the Glencoe road), on which we curled up side by side and slept. There kept running through my head, between waking and sleeping, a recently read verse:

Thou shouldst die as he dies

For whom none sheddeth tears;

Filling thine eyes

And fulfilling thine ears

With the brilliance... the bloom and the beauty ...

[It's from 'Atalanta in Calydon'. Swinburne.]

Start: 4. Hook. Philosophical point

End: 4. Contemplative

Autumn Dusk by Virginia Woolf

Now the sun had sunk. Sky and sea were indistinguishable. The waves breaking spread their white fans far out over the shore, sent white shadows into the recesses of sonorous caves and then rolled back sighing over the shingle.

The tree shook its branches and a scattering of leaves fell to the ground. There they settled with perfect composure on the precise spot where they would await dissolution. Black and grey were shot into the garden from the broken vessel that had once held red light. Dark shadows blackened the tunnels between the stalks. The thrush was silent and the worm sucked itself back into its narrow hole. Now and again a whitened and hollow straw was blown from an old nest and fell into the dark grasses among the rotten apples. The light had faded from the tool-house wall and the adder's skin hung from the nail empty. All the colours in the room had overflowed their banks. The precise brush stroke was swollen and lop-sided; cupboards and chairs melted their brown masses into one huge obscurity. The height from floor to ceiling was hung with vast curtains of shaking darkness. The looking-glass was pale as the mouth of a cave shadowed by hanging creepers.

The substance had gone from the solidity of the hills. Travelling lights drove a plummy wedge among unseen and sunken roads, but no lights opened among the folded wings of the hills, and there was no sound save the cry of a bird seeking some lonelier tree. At the cliff's edge there was an equal murmur of air that had been brushed through forests, of water that had been cooled in a thousand glassy hollows of mid-ocean.

As if there were waves of darkness in the air, darkness moved on, covering houses, hills, trees, as waves of water wash round the sides of some sunken ship. Darkness washed down streets, eddying round single figures, engulfing them; blotting out couples clasped under the showery darkness of elm trees in full summer foliage. Darkness rolled its waves along grassy rides and over the wrinkled skin of the turf, enveloping the solitary thorn tree and the empty snail shells at its foot. Mounting higher, darkness blew along the bare upland slopes, and met the fretted and abraded pinnacles of the mountain where the snow lodges for ever on the hard rock even when the valleys are full of running streams and yellow vine leaves, and girls, sitting on verandahs, look up at the snow, shading their faces with their fans. Them, too, darkness covered.

First two sentences: word length.

Repetition 'white'. (And, last para, multiply of 'darkness'.)

End para 1: onomatopoeia

Shook, composure: personification

Timescale: forward (would await) and back (had once held)

Negative space, silent thrush, tunnels of darkness

Juxtaposition: whitened and hollow

First metaphor: colours overflowed banks; then room as picture

First simile: mirror as cave

Folded wings of the hills ie like sleeping birds

Scale: thorn tree and snail shell

metrical effects: lodges for ever on the hard rock vs valleys are full of running streams

Alliteration: substance – solidity. Perfect – precise .Full – foliage . Couples clasped. Faces with their fans.

Word order, final sentence.

Sonnet 73 (Autumn)

That time of year thou mayst in me behold
When yellow leaves, or none, or few, do hang
Upon those boughs which shake against the cold,
Bare ruin'd choirs, where late the sweet birds sang.
In me thou see'st the twilight of such day
As after sunset fadeth in the west,
Which by and by black night doth take away,
Death's second self, that seals up all in rest.

line 4 'finest line in all English poetry'.

William Empson's "Seven Types of Ambiguity" opens with a discussion of the "bare ruin'd choirs" line:

"There is no pun, double syntax or dubiety of feeling in 'Bare ruined choirs, where late the sweet birds sang' but the comparison holds for many reasons; because ruined monastery choirs are places in which to sing, because they involve sitting in a row, because they are made of wood, are carved into knots and so forth, because they used to be surrounded by a sheltering building crystallised out of the likeness of a forest, and coloured with stained glass and painting like bowers and leaves, because they are now abandoned by all but the grey walls coloured like the skies of winter, because the cold and Narcissistic charm suggested by choir-boys suits well with Shakespeare's feeling for the object of the Sonnets, and for various sociological and historical reasons (the protestant destruction of monasteries; fear of puritanism), which it would be hard now to trace out in their proportions; these reasons, and many more relating the simile to its place in the Sonnet, must all combine to give the line its beauty, and there is a sort of ambiguity in not knowing which of them to hold most clearly in mind. Clearly this is involved in all such richness and heightening of effect, and the machinations of ambiguity are among the very roots of poetry."

ruined monastery choirs (ie choir stalls)

places to sing

while sitting in a row

made of wood

carved into knots etc

used to be surrounded by sheltering, forest-like building (pillars, stained glass etc)

abandoned by all

grey walls coloured like winter sky

sexy choirboys (early sonnets)

destruction of monasteries and fear of Puritanism